

University of Canterbury HIST480

'If we never meet again': The Migration Experiences of  
Emma Barker in Nineteenth-Century Canterbury

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'This dissertation is submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of BA Honours in History at the University of Canterbury. This dissertation is the result of my own work. Material from the published or unpublished work of other historians used in the dissertation is credited to the author in the footnote references. The dissertation is approximately 10,000 words in length.'

## **ABSTRACT**

Studies of migration from England to New Zealand in the nineteenth century have tended to neglect the stories of women. My study addresses this gap by examining the migration story of Emma Barker and her family, and analysing in what ways family dynamics resulted in a gendered experience of migration. It explores gender in a relational manner by comparing and contrasting Emma's experiences with those of her husband, Alfred. This study also adds to the historiography of the Western family and illuminates broader issues of marriage, parenthood and migration networks. It is based on a sequence of letters written by the Barker family to their extended family in England and highlights the importance of personal correspondence in writing migration histories. This study argues for more nuanced stories of migration that challenge accounts which emphasise the alienating aspect of migration for women.

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## INTRODUCTION

The English were one of the largest groups of migrants to come to New Zealand, and they make up a significant portion of the immigrant population today. Despite this, limited research has been done on flows of English migrants to New Zealand.<sup>1</sup> Studies of migration from England to New Zealand in the nineteenth century have focussed largely on mass movements of people and their origins. Relatively little is known about the experiences of English migrants in the nineteenth century when compared with knowledge about the social worlds of other migrant groups.<sup>2</sup> Migration histories have tended to neglect the stories of women, particularly married emigrants, and in what ways migration was a gendered experience.<sup>3</sup> Moreover, personal correspondence is an under-utilised source in migration studies, and comprehensive analyses of the migration experiences of women and the English based on such material is limited. Frances Porter and Charlotte Macdonald's study of nineteenth-century women living in New Zealand is a key text, although it claims that migration was an 'inherently destabilising' experience for women, which as Angela McCarthy points out can only be a tentative conclusion.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Lyndon Fraser and Angela McCarthy, eds., *Far from 'Home': The English in New Zealand* (Dunedin: Otago University Press, 2012), pp. 7-8.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid. For other works on the English diaspora see, Rollo Arnold, *The Farthest Promised Land: English Villagers, New Zealand Immigrants of the 1870s* (Wellington: Victoria University Press, 1981); Raewyn Dalziel, 'Emigration and Kinship: Migrants to New Plymouth, 1840-1843', *New Zealand Journal of History* 25:2 (1991), pp. 112-28; Jock Phillips and Terry Hearn, *Settlers: New Zealand Immigrants from England, Ireland, and Scotland, 1800-1945* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2008); and Paul Hudson, 'English Emigration to New Zealand, 1839-1850', *Economic History Review*, 54:4 (2001), pp. 680-91.

<sup>3</sup> For instance see, Charlotte Macdonald, *A Woman of Good Character: Single Women as Immigrant Settlers in Nineteenth Century New Zealand* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin, 1990); and Katie Pickles, 'Pink Cheeked and Surplus': Single British Women's Interwar Migration to New Zealand', in *Shifting Centres: Women and Migration in New Zealand History*, ed. by Lyndon Fraser and Katie Pickles (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2002), pp. 63-81.

<sup>4</sup> Frances Porter and Charlotte Macdonald, eds. 'My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates': *The Unsettled Lives of Women in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand as Revealed to Sisters, Family and Friends* (Auckland: Auckland University Press with Bridget Williams Books, 1996), p. 3; and Angela McCarthy, 'A Good Idea of Colonial Life': Personal Letters and Irish Migration to New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History* 35: 1 (2001), p. 1. Catherine Bishop also disputes this, and argues that women were mobile, active, and connected. See Catherine Bishop, 'Women on the Move: Gender, Money-making and Mobility in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Australasia', *History Australia* 11:2 (2014), pp. 28-59.

This analysis will contest Porter and Macdonald's 'unsettlement' thesis and David Fitzpatrick's assertion that 'the great questions and challenges posed by emigration, and the responses of those involved, typically transcended gender.'<sup>5</sup> It will do so by using the private correspondence of Emma Barker (née Bacon) to tell a nuanced story of migration (see figure 1). Emma and her husband, Alfred, wrote to their extended family in England about both the hardship and joy that migration brought, and it is these sequences of letters that illustrate how family dynamics gave rise to gendered experiences of migration. The significance of family is at the heart of the Barker story. Emma and Alfred sought to provide their children with a better future in the antipodes, while still maintaining connections at home. Emma's role as a wife and a mother shaped her life profoundly. It is her story that will be told, and compared and contrasted with Alfred's accounts of being a father and a husband in the new colony. A study of Emma Barker's experiences as an English migrant in nineteenth-century Canterbury can therefore address multiple gaps in the historiography on migration.



Figure 1: Portrait of Emma Barker (nee Bacon) taken prior to departure to New Zealand, ca 1850, 2008.137.370, Canterbury Museum (henceforth CM).

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<sup>5</sup> David Fitzpatrick, 'This is the place that foolish girls are knowing': Reading the Letters of Emigrant Irish Women in Colonial Australia', in *Irish Women in Colonial Australia*, ed. by Trevor McClaughlin (St. Leonards, 1998), p. 163.

My analysis is based on a number of letters in the Barker Collection at Canterbury Museum.<sup>6</sup> This includes all the extant letters that Emma Barker wrote prior to migration and while on board the *Charlotte Jane*, as well as the letters she wrote once her family had arrived in New Zealand.<sup>7</sup> Her shipboard journal is a twenty one page manuscript which is complemented by eight other letters, mostly to her sisters and cousin in England, written by Emma.<sup>8</sup> Such a sequence of letters spanning the migration process enables an exploration of Emma Barker's experiences in an in depth manner. In my reading of the letters I perceive gender and the family to be major themes in her writing. Likewise I consider her class and religious background to be pervasive elements in her letters, and these topics will be discussed throughout my analysis of gender and the family. The letters written by Alfred Barker will be used in conjunction with Emma's, in order to explore marriage, motherhood and gender dynamics in a relational manner.<sup>9</sup> Alfred's letters, addressed to his father and brothers, consists of a shipboard journal and around forty five other letters.<sup>10</sup> Although he wrote to his

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<sup>6</sup> I use two shipboard letter diaries, as well as around sixty other letters from the Barker Collection throughout this paper.

<sup>7</sup> The *Charlotte Jane* was one of the first four ships to carry emigrants from England to Canterbury, arriving in Lyttelton on 16 December, 1850. See, Anna Rogers, *Illustrated History of Canterbury* (Auckland: Reed Books, 2007), pp. 42-44.

<sup>8</sup> See, Diary: Emma Barker (née Bacon), 1850, 2008.127.1, Canterbury Museum (hereafter CM); a sequence of letters from 1850-1856 written by Emma Barker to her sisters, cousin, and niece, 2008.127.41-200.127.48, CM; and a letter written by Emma Barker to her cousin in 1958, 92/64 (folder 1, item 3), CM. Emma addressed her shipboard journal to her mother, who lived in Midhurst until her death on 17 June 1856. Emma's father died in 1832, and her mother remarried. The journal is also addressed to her sister, Sarah Bacon. The other letters are primarily addressed to her half-sisters Sophia and Mary. Sophia was married to Alfred's brother, William. Other letters are addressed to her cousin Maria. One letter is addressed to her niece, Florence. See, Letters: Death of Alfred Charles Barker, April 1873, 2008.127.129, CM.

<sup>9</sup> For instance see, Diary: Dr Alfred Charles Barker, 1850, 2008.127.2, CM and a sequence of letters from 1850-1858 written by Dr. Alfred Charles Barker to his father and brothers including 2008.127.3-36, CM; 92/64 (folder 1, item 1-2 and 4-10), CM; and letters written after 1858 by Dr. Alfred Charles Barker to his father, brothers and cousin including 92/64 (folder 3, item 26); 92/64 (folder 10, item 104), CM; and 2007.127.125, CM.

<sup>10</sup> Alfred's father, Joseph Gibbs Barker, lived in Hereford. His three other sons entered the Church. Alfred's sister, Sarah Elizabeth, died in 1843. Alfred mainly wrote to his brother Matthias, whom C.C. Burdon describes as 'the Doctor's favourite brother.' Note that Burdon was married to Alfred's granddaughter, and may have had unique insight into the Barker family history. See, C.C. Burdon, *Dr A.C. Barker 1819-1873: Photographer, Farmer, Physician* (Dunedin: John McIndoe Ltd, 1972), p. 28. Matthias came to visit Alfred in Christchurch after Emma's death in 1858, and they corresponded right up until Alfred's death in 1873. Matthias Barker died as Vicar of Waltham Cross in Herefordshire. See, Mary Constance Barker, *The Ancestry of Alfred Charles Barker*,

family until his death in 1873, I am primarily analysing the letters he wrote up until Emma's death in 1858.

Emma, daughter of Mary Pritchett and Samuel Outram Bacon, was born in London on 18 February 1820.<sup>11</sup> She married Alfred, the fifth child of Joseph Gibbs Barker and Sarah Pritchett Bousfield, on 1 July 1845.<sup>12</sup> Both came from reputable merchant families, and their marriage further entrenched the connections of the Pritchett, Bousfield, Bacon, and Barker families.<sup>13</sup> Prior to migrating to Canterbury Alfred had practised as a surgeon at Matlock Bath and Rugby for five years.<sup>14</sup> Alfred's goal was to 'purchase land and be the first doctor among the Colonists who are all well connected families.'<sup>15</sup> In 1850 the *Charlotte Jane* arrived in Lyttleton, and marked the beginning of the systematic colonisation of Canterbury. On board were the Barker family: Emma Barker, Alfred Charles Barker and their three young children.<sup>16</sup> Alfred had been selected as the shipboard surgeon, and the family reflected the ideal qualities of prospective inhabitants of the Church of England settlement. The couple were young, religious and respectable 'colonists,' eager to become land owners and improve

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1819-1873, of Christchurch, New Zealand (Ashburton, New Zealand: Bruce Print. Co., 1970), pp. 50-62; and Burdon, *Dr A.C. Barker 1819-1873*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>11</sup> Barker, *The Ancestry of Alfred Charles Barker*, p. 54.

<sup>12</sup> Family Register: Alfred Charles Barker, 2008.127.168, CM. Alfred was born in Hackney on 5 January 1819, see, Barker, *The Ancestry of Alfred Charles Barker*, p. 54.

<sup>13</sup> The Bacons had prospered in commerce. 'The elder Bacon had handed over the family's London drapery business to his son and with his family had retired to the pleasant Sussex hamlet of Midhurst,' see, Burdon, *Dr A.C. Barker 1819-1873*, p. 13; also see, John B. Turner, 'Barker, Alfred Charles, Biography,' Te Ara Encyclopedia of New Zealand, accessed September 27, 2015, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/en/biographies/1b4/barker-alfred-charles>. 'Barker was descended from a fifteenth century gentry family, the Barkers of Aston, Claverley, in Staffordshire, and latterly a line of prosperous Birmingham merchants. His father was a wealthy London linen merchant turned evangelist, a puritan whose passion was converting Jews to Christianity.'

<sup>14</sup> Typescript of article: Records of early Christchurch, 20 Feb 1931, 2008.127.196, CM. Alfred was educated at King's College, Cambridge, see, Transcript: Notes: Alfred Charles Barker, 2008.127.213, CM.

<sup>15</sup> Letter: Emma Barker to her cousin Maria, 15 Jun 1850, 2008.127.42, CM.

<sup>16</sup> The Barker children who arrived on the *Charlotte Jane* were Richard, born 11 July 1846; Samuel, born 6 Feb 1848; and Arthur, born 28 August 1849. The children who were born in New Zealand were Sarah Elizabeth, born 15 March 1850; Mary, born 1855; John Matthias, born 1856; and William, born 26 Aug 1858. See, Family Register: Alfred Charles Barker, 2008.127.168, CM



their situation.<sup>17</sup> My purpose is to explore how Emma's role as a wife and a mother shaped her migration experiences.

A large body of literature points to the ways in which gender is a factor which shapes how people experience and understand events. The aim of women's history in the 1970s and 1980s was to uncover women's narratives and place them back into traditional historical accounts.<sup>18</sup> A parallel development was the post-1975 focus on women's cultures, and a push to emphasise it as a legitimate area of historical inquiry.<sup>19</sup> This research uncovers the narrative of Emma Barker's life and is therefore in the biographical tradition of women's history which emphasises women's culture and agency. While it remains an important aspect of women's history, this approach was increasingly criticised in the early 1980s for not questioning the fundamentally male-dominated discourse of history.<sup>20</sup> Joan Wallach Scott's work has been particularly influential in examining the ways in which history as a discourse contributes to the subjugation of women. She proposed that historians should focus on broader structures and discourses of gender, with gender defined as, 'the social organisation

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<sup>17</sup> For the selection criteria for prospective migrants see, James Hight and C. R. Straubel, *A History of Canterbury, Volume I.: to 1854* (Christchurch: Whitcombe and Tombs, 1957), pp. 170-73. On nineteenth-century migration to Canterbury, see R.H. Silcock, 'Immigration into Canterbury under the Provincial Government', MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 1964; R.L.N. Greenaway, 'Henry Selfe Selfe and the Origins and Early Development of Canterbury', MA thesis, University of Canterbury, 1972; K.A. Pickens, 'Canterbury 1851-1881: Demography and Mobility. A Comparative Study', PhD thesis, Washington University, St. Louis, 1976; K.A. Pickens, 'The Origins of the Population of Nineteenth-Century Canterbury', *New Zealand Geographer* 33 (1977), pp.69-75; Macdonald, *A Woman of Good Character*; Lyndon Fraser, *To Tara via Holyhead: Irish Immigrants in Nineteenth-Century Christchurch* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1997); Edmund Bohan, 'Blest madman': *FitzGerald of Canterbury* (Christchurch, 1998); Phillips and Hearn, *Settlers*; and Lyndon Fraser and Sarah Dwyer, 'When rolling seas shall no more divide us': Transnationalism and the Local Geographies of Ulster Protestant Settlement in Nineteenth-Century Canterbury', *New Zealand Journal of History* 42:2 (2009), pp. 182-197.

<sup>18</sup> Robert B. Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society 1650-1850: The Emergence of Separate Spheres?* (United States of America: Addison Wesley Longman Ltd., 1998), pp. 2-3.

<sup>19</sup> Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850*, Rev. ed. (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. xvii.

<sup>20</sup> Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, pp. 1-3. On women's history in colonial New Zealand in this tradition see for instance, Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald, and Margaret Tennant, eds., *Women in History: Essays on European Women in New Zealand* (Wellington: Allen & Unwin and Port Nicholson Press, 1986); and Barbara Brookes, Charlotte Macdonald, and Margaret Tennant, eds. *Women in History 2: Essays on European Women in New Zealand* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, 1992).

of sexual difference.<sup>21</sup> In this way, Scott and others advocated for historians to include men in their analyses.<sup>22</sup> Therefore Emma Barker's experiences will be analysed in a relational context, recognising that power is negotiated and constructed in complex ways at the interpersonal level.<sup>23</sup> There is very limited information about how husbands and wives relate to each other in the nineteenth century, especially from women's perspectives. In order to examine her relationship with Alfred, this dissertation compares their experiences to explore the idea of gender in a comprehensive manner. In addition to this, it explores Emma's role as a mother and compares it with Alfred's experiences of fatherhood.

By analysing gender in this manner I am also contributing to the historiography of the Western family. The study of the history of the family as a social institution became especially prominent from the 1970s onwards, with the middle class Victorian family a key subject of analysis. There are several approaches to the history of the family, including a demographic and an economic approach.<sup>24</sup> This paper aligns with Michael Anderson's classification of 'the sentiments approach', which traces attitudes about the family through examining interpersonal relationships. Anderson points to the emergence of 'modern' social relationships during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, as well as the increasing discreteness of the family to include only parents and their unmarried children. This gave rise to a greater amount of interpersonal affection in this familial unit over time.<sup>25</sup> This approach, however, has been criticised for its emphasis on grand theories of change and for interpreting affectionate marriages as equal ones.<sup>26</sup> This study, therefore, will take into account broad

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<sup>21</sup> Joan W. Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, Rev. ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 2.

<sup>22</sup> See for instance, Caroline Daley and Deborah Montgomerie, eds., *The Gendered Kiwi*. (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1999).

<sup>23</sup> Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, p. 46.

<sup>24</sup> Michael Anderson, *Approaches to the History of the Western Family 1500-1914* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd., 1980), pp. 1-3.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 25-30.

<sup>26</sup> Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, pp. 90-91.

changes and patterns but adopt Robert B. Shoemaker's approach of examining gender within the lifecycle of the family, specifically exploring marriage and parenthood.<sup>27</sup>

Gender has been a component of analysis in histories of the Western family. In the late 1980s Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* became a landmark study. Although it focussed heavily on class as a determinant of gender, it also examined the private nature of the family.<sup>28</sup> The work specifically focussed on a gendered distinction between the public and the private sphere, also named the 'separate spheres' framework. This concluded that women, influenced by the 'cult of domesticity', were largely confined to the private sphere of the home, while men were restricted to the public sphere.<sup>29</sup> Although *Family Fortunes* considers the complexities of the separate spheres framework, it tends to neglect the idea of multiple and subjective gendered experiences. This means Davidoff and Hall tend to essentialise gender, rather than acknowledging that varied interpretations of masculinity and femininity exist.<sup>30</sup> As Kathryn Gleadle proposes, the field would benefit from a focus on 'the ways in which individual agents both reproduce, are constrained by, and often subvert cultural norms of class and gender.'<sup>31</sup> I will take this idea as a platform for exploring Emma Barker's migration experiences.

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<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> Kathryn Gleadle, 'Revisiting Family Fortunes: Reflections on the Twentieth Anniversary of the Publication of L. Davidoff & C. Hall (1987) *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson)', *Women's History Review* 16:5 (2007), pp. 774-75.

<sup>29</sup> On the separate spheres framework see, Linda K. Kerber, 'Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Woman's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History', *Journal of American History* 75 (1988), pp. 9-39; Dorothy Kelly and Susan M. Reverby, eds., *Gendered Domains: rethinking Public and Private in Women's History* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); and Jean Bethke Elshtain, *Public Man, Private Woman: Women in Social and Political Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

<sup>30</sup> Gleadle, 'Revisiting Family Fortunes', pp. 778-79.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, p. 776.

Gender history on the whole has not tended to use the family as a category of analysis, and vice versa.<sup>32</sup> This is the case in New Zealand historiography, as Erik Olssen demonstrated in his survey of twenty years of historiography on the New Zealand family.<sup>33</sup> This can partly be explained by a focus on broader forces that inform gender, which are often not included in the history of the family. As Scott argues, the family is not the only place where gendered meanings are constructed, and they are found in all forms of social organisation.<sup>34</sup> Another criticism of analysing gender within the family has been that it confines women to the domestic sphere and, therefore, is a source of oppression.<sup>35</sup> The purpose of this dissertation is not to attribute the origins of gendered construction to the family in particular, but to recognise that it is nevertheless ‘a primary site where gender is constructed.’<sup>36</sup> Furthermore, as Megan Doolittle proposes, the history of family would benefit from a focus on internal dynamics, which brings history back to the ‘messy everyday business of life and death, the eating of meals and the clearing up afterwards.’<sup>37</sup> Davidoff and Hall also point out the lack of focus on the basic features of gender relations.<sup>38</sup> The risk of exploring gender in the inner dynamics of the family is that women are then implicitly defined by their relationships to others, which subsumes their individual identities.<sup>39</sup> In order to avoid this, Alfred Barker’s role within the family will also be examined, which places masculinity back into a domestic

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<sup>32</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. xix; and Angela Wanhalla, ‘Family, Community and Gender’, in *The New Oxford History of New Zealand*, ed. by Giselle Byrnes (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 447.

<sup>33</sup> Erik Olssen, ‘Families and the Gendering of European New Zealand in the Colonial Period, 1840-80’, in *The Gendered Kiwi*, ed. by Caroline Daley and Deborah Montgomerie (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1999), pp. 37-55.

<sup>34</sup> Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History*, pp. 37-38.

<sup>35</sup> Wanhalla, ‘Family, Community and Gender’, p. 447.

<sup>36</sup> Olssen, ‘Families and the Gendering of European New Zealand’, p. 37.

<sup>37</sup> This focus on the interpersonal and the private is often trivialised and not considered a subject of academic rigour see, Megan Doolittle, ‘Close Relations? Bringing together Gender and Family in English History’, in *Gender and History: Retrospect and Prospect*, ed. by Leonore Davidoff, Keith McClelland, and Eleni Varikas (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers Ltd., 1999), pp. 124-26; This is exemplified in the text *The New Zealand Family from 1840: a Demographic History* which states that inter-personal aspects of family life ‘are probably reported on better by novelists and dramatists than academics,’ see, Ian Pool, Arunachalam Dharmalingam, and Janet Sceats, *The New Zealand Family from 1840: A Demographic History* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2007), p. xiv.

<sup>38</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. xxxii.

<sup>39</sup> Doolittle, ‘Close Relations’, p. 126.

setting; an analytical dimension it is often left out of.<sup>40</sup> In doing so, the inherent tensions, contradictions, and pluralities of ideas about gender in the family as they apply to Emma Barker's migration experiences are explored.

An analysis of gender as it relates to the family is especially useful in a study of migrants' lives. The family was significant for migrants in the nineteenth century, as recent scholarship on kinship networks suggests.<sup>41</sup> Not only did immigrants want to improve their family prospects, but in the context of migration family was a significant facet of identity – an identity that arguably became more fragile once migrants left their home and had to adjust to new environments.<sup>42</sup> As David Gerber argues in the American context, writing letters to family members in their countries of origin served a role in shaping and maintaining the identity of migrants.<sup>43</sup> In this research I therefore contest Macdonald and Porter's assertion that letter writing was largely maintained as a formality and that New Zealand was 'a place to establish new connections.'<sup>44</sup> Instead, I argue that connections with extended family at home remained significant for the Barker family, and that their English acquaintances in Canterbury also reflect such community ties. Moreover, family members who journeyed to

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<sup>40</sup> Ibid. For the seminal work on pākehā masculinity see, Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country?: The Image of the Pākehā Male, A History*, Rev. ed. (Auckland: Penguin Books, 1996).

<sup>41</sup> The literature on migrant networks over the last two decades is voluminous. See, especially, Monica Boyd's seminal essay, 'Family and Personal Networks in International Migration: Recent Developments and New Agendas', *International Migration Review* 23:3 (1989), pp.638–70. Key works in Australasia include David Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation: Personal Accounts of Irish Migration to Australia* (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 1995); Angela McCarthy, *Irish Migrants in New Zealand, 1840-1937: 'the Desired Haven'* (Suffolk: the Boydell Press, 2005); Lyndon Fraser, 'Irish Women's Networks on the West Coast of New Zealand's South Island, 1864–1922', *Women's History Review* 33 (2006), pp. 459–75; and Angela McCarthy, 'Bands of Fellowship': The Role of Personal Relationships and Social Networks among Irish Migrants in New Zealand, 1861–1911,' in *Irish Migration, Networks and Ethnic Identities Since 1750*, ed. by Enda Delaney and Donald M. MacRaild (London and New York, 2007), pp. 163–209; and Angela McCarthy, *Personal Narratives of Irish and Scottish Migration, 1921-65: 'for spirit and adventure'* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2012).

<sup>42</sup> Olssen, 'Families and the Gendering of European New Zealand', p. 41.

<sup>43</sup> David A. Gerber, 'Yankeys Now?': Joseph and Rebecca Hartley's Circuitous Path to American Identity - A Case Study in the Use of Immigrant Letters as Social Documentation', *Journal of American Ethnic History* 28:3 (2009), p. 7.

<sup>44</sup> Porter and Macdonald, 'My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates', p. 386.

New Zealand together were often a comforting presence for each other.<sup>45</sup> In this sense it is important to retain a sense of the emotions which were involved in the migration process. Family was also considered an important civilising factor in nineteenth-century New Zealand, with women particularly lauded in this capacity. Olssen argues that ‘systematic colonisers’, despite having differing conceptions about family, ‘accepted the Evangelical idealisation of the family that became the Victorian orthodoxy’, and ‘accepted the centrality of the conjugal family to a civilised society.’<sup>46</sup> An evaluation of the internal dynamics of the Barker family will be considered within this context since the migration process shaped these dynamics in significant ways.

There are several limitations in using letters as the main primary sources for research. Although there is no surviving correspondence between Emma and Alfred, this methodological issue can be mitigated by reading Emma and Alfred’s letters to their extended family ‘against the grain’. I am also dealing with partial sources in the sense that they are sometimes illegible.<sup>47</sup> The correspondence is one-sided, which means that certain aspects of the Barker’s story remain elusive. Moreover, Emma Barker’s migration experiences cannot be taken as the general experiences of women during that time period. Her position as a British, middle class, Protestant, and literate woman inform her experiences. Neither can my paper generalise about the nineteenth-century Victorian family. This also makes it problematic in the sense that by implication I am excluding marginal voices from the historical record. Yet by placing Emma Barker’s experiences in the wider context of migration and the family my study can still speak to aggregate issues. In this sense my analysis will emphasise the diversity and multitude of migration experiences.

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<sup>45</sup> McCarthy, ‘A Good Idea of Colonial Life’, p. 4.

<sup>46</sup> Olssen, ‘Families and the Gendering of European New Zealand’, p. 40.

<sup>47</sup> The editorial interventions in the transcripts of personal letters used in this dissertation are as follows: the introduction of sentence and paragraph breaks; clarifications rendered in italics and square brackets; missing letters or words placed in italics; the insertion of capital letters where required.

David Fitzpatrick and Angela McCarthy place importance on the function and form of letters.<sup>48</sup> For instance, if one accepts the notion that social life is a ‘series of performances’ then letter writing can be taken as a particular medium for describing experiences and thoughts; one that comes with its own set of practices and rituals.<sup>49</sup> The composition of letters was subject to certain conventions and practices. In his discussion of Irish-Australian letters, Fitzpatrick emphasises the ‘consolatory function’ of migrant letters as ‘token[s] of solidarity.’<sup>50</sup> In order to mitigate the limitations of my sources I use Fitzpatrick’s and McCarthy’s approach to migration studies. They seek to explain the background of the writers and recipients of the letters as much as possible, which is important as it broadens our understanding of migrant experiences. I will therefore place my discussion in the context of the Barker’s background and the experiences of early English migrants in New Zealand. Moreover, I will include examples of the original letters to demonstrate their form (see figure 2 and 3).

This dissertation explores the gendered experience of migration through a case study of Emma Barker, as based on her personal correspondence to family and friends. It will do so by assessing the Barker family dynamics and by demonstrating the importance of the family in the context of migration. The first chapter investigates Emma’s conjugal relationship with Alfred and in what ways this affected her experiences, with particular attention given to the influences of class and religion. It argues for looking beyond a thesis of ‘unsettlement’ to a more nuanced view of migration for women. Chapter two discusses how motherhood shaped Emma’s migration story. It demonstrates how parenthood defined Emma and Alfred’s aspirations and illuminates on the wider issue of family networks in the migration process.

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<sup>48</sup> See McCarthy, *Irish Migrants in New Zealand*; and David Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation*.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Burke, *What is Cultural History?* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2004), p. 31.

<sup>50</sup> Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation*, p. 20.



2008.127.1.161  
Ship Charlotte Jane Sept 12  
+ 1850

My dear Sarah

This is the first day since leaving  
Plymouth that I or any one has felt equal to  
writing any thing. We sailed at 7 on Saturday  
the confusion of sailing being as well as arriving  
at Plymouth as undisturbable though it does not equal  
the miseries we endured in the bay of Biscay  
begin to be very rough on Sunday evening, we lay  
on deck all day but service at 10 in storm. I felt too  
languid to remember the try it. On Monday morning  
we were rushing through our Dirpy Salt hills of water  
every body ill. I sat on your with the Baby in my arms  
not daring to move. Baby quite white with screaming  
to be dropped at last I found a Scotch woman  
who offered to nurse him and the two boys & I laid all  
day in bed. The confusion of things muddling all  
water plashing in at your windows only one the day  
was beautiful. About 3 o'clock we got to get a light  
to light the lamp and every thing slight all over the ship.  
We rose the next day a set of groovy wrap looking quarters  
I spent all that day lying about on deck until this  
morning we were thrown about in all sorts of ways  
today the climate is calm & warm & water smooth  
I think too we are getting a little into the way of  
the sudden jolting. I wish they spoke faster but it  
is very awkward you may be thrown down in a  
minute  
We have however every reason for thankfulness to God for  
bringing us so speedily through these rough parts  
We are now off Spain and I hope to be able to send a  
little daily to this cursory account  
P

We are greatly troubled with cockroaches as long as your  
finger I at least to this save but our cats keep ours off us & for

Figure 2: The first page of Emma's shipboard journal, addressed to her sister Sarah. Her slanted handwriting is likely due to writing on board the ship, as 'you may be thrown down in a minute'. Diary: Emma Barker to her mother and sister, Sarah, 1850, 2008.127.1, CM.





## CHAPTER ONE

### **‘I walked with her during the few years she was spared to me’: Marriage and Gender in the Barker Family**

Porter and Macdonald argue that upbeat accounts of emancipation neglect the ‘unsettling’ reality of migration for women. This is also part of the strand of scholarship that suggests gender roles did not alter significantly in the colony.<sup>51</sup> Whether women thrived in these roles and valued their contribution as a ‘civilising force’ in society is debated. Raewyn Dalziel argues that ‘life within the bounds of home and family and respectability was not as frustrating for women in New Zealand as it had become for women of Great Britain.’<sup>52</sup> Dalziel proposes that women’s roles as ‘home-makers’ intensified in the colony, but that they entailed ‘a high degree of personal reward and satisfaction.’<sup>53</sup> Between these two opposing notions of unsettlement and triumph lies a more nuanced view of migration. Women may indeed have found satisfaction in the domestic duties that were still their responsibility once they arrived in the colony, yet, the hard work this entailed, coupled with the harsher features of colonial life, meant they still found it difficult at times.<sup>54</sup>

During the early nineteenth century the family and the home became increasingly important for the English middle class. Historians disagree about the extent and the timing of the shift, but there is a general consensus that the Victorian middle class valorised domesticity and the home.<sup>55</sup> An emphasis on familial relationships was epitomised in the ideal of the companionate marriage, which was based on love and affection.<sup>56</sup> However, there is limited information on power relations in Victorian marriages, especially since marriage and the

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<sup>51</sup> See Dalziel, ‘The Colonial Helpmeet.’

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, p. 115.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

<sup>54</sup> Olssen, ‘Families and the Gendering of European New Zealand,’ p. 38. Note that Porter and Macdonald do call for a nuanced view but ultimately their thesis is one of unsettlement.

<sup>55</sup> For instance see, John Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1999).

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 27.

feelings attached to it were considered to be deeply private.<sup>57</sup> To what extent did Alfred and Emma meet this ideal?

An analysis of Emma and Alfred's relationship can demonstrate how gender was expressed in the Barker family. Their relationship, affected by the middle-class Victorian ideal of the companionate marriage, to a certain extent reflected the gendered roles it specified. As a result, class and religion were the main factors that shaped Emma and Alfred's gendered experiences of migration. In writing about their daily life and activities, gendered divisions and experiences in their relationship become apparent, as well as certain nuances and contradictions. Their love and affection for each other can likewise be discerned within their letters. The first part of this chapter investigates the background and context of Emma and Alfred's relationship. In the second part I examine how class and family structure affected gendered roles within their marriage. Lastly, religion is explored as a factor that gave rise to certain gendered experiences for the couple.

### ***The Barker Marriage: Background and Context***

It is likely that Victorian ideals about the family had a significant impact on Barker family dynamics. John Tosh and others suggest that the companionate ideal was difficult to achieve as it was undermined by patriarchal authority. Although men valued domesticity and it formed a part of the middle class masculine ideal, ultimately men provided for the family outside of the home and women were the 'home-makers' who were responsible for upholding the domestic ideal.<sup>58</sup> To what extent was this companionate ideal realised in colonial New Zealand? Young married couples were the most desirable immigrants since women were

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<sup>57</sup> A. James Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship: Conflict in Nineteenth-Century Married Life* (London: Routledge, 1992), p. 135; and Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, p. 89.

<sup>58</sup> Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 26.

protected and provided for while marriage was thought to keep men civil in the new colony.<sup>59</sup>

Porter and Macdonald propose that the companionate marriage was not realised in New Zealand until the end of the nineteenth century, when emancipatory reforms for women were enshrined in law. Prior to this they, like Tosh, emphasise the separate spheres framework and the patriarchal nature of marriage. Although they concede marriage was often affectionate, they suggest that this affection did not rest on equality.<sup>60</sup>

Some historians argue that colonial New Zealand developed its own gender ideals and practices. Like class divisions, they argue that gender roles were less distinct and offered women more freedom.<sup>61</sup> Migrants themselves wrote about this equality. Alfred Barker warned his brother Delabere, who was considering immigrating to New Zealand, about how hard all newcomers worked: 'all of us here from the highest to the lowest [work hard].' He also prepared him for the potential domestic duties as '[you have to] wash out all your own linen yourself as many gentlemen do here even now.'<sup>62</sup> Alfred's comment is a reflection of the way in which many historians characterise gender in colonial New Zealand. Contrary to Porter and Macdonald, Erik Olssen argues that in mid-nineteenth-century New Zealand 'the idea of separate spheres was more honoured in the breach than the observance.'<sup>63</sup> Jim McAloon also demonstrates a revision of the 'separate spheres' framework, proposing that women's involvement in colonial family estates was more prominent than previously supposed. Yet McAloon stresses that ultimately 'the legal forms and customs of the day

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<sup>59</sup> Raewyn Dalziel, 'The Colonial Helpmeet: Women's Role and the Vote in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *The New Zealand Journal of History* 11:2 (1977), p. 113; and Olssen, 'Families and the Gendering of European New Zealand', pp. 40-41.

<sup>60</sup> Porter and Macdonald, *My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates*, pp. 254-256.

<sup>61</sup> For an overview of the debates around the experiences of migrant women in colonial New Zealand, see *ibid*, pp. 5-7.

<sup>62</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 30 Apr 1851, 2008.127.14, CM.

<sup>63</sup> Olssen also offers a reminder that 'in the mid-nineteenth century ... the way in which Britons thought of the family still varied considerably according to ethnicity, region or nation, class and religion,' see, Olssen, 'Families and the Gendering of European New Zealand,' p. 38.

reinforced the husband's dominant position in the family economy.'<sup>64</sup> The patriarchal nature of marriage remains a significant factor in a nuanced examination Emma and Alfred's experiences.

On 1 July 1845, at the parish church of St. John, Hampstead, Middlesex in England Emma Bacon and Alfred Barker were married by Reverend William Barker, Alfred's brother.<sup>65</sup> Emma and Alfred were 25 and 26 years of age respectively, which reflects the relatively late age at which the early Victorians usually married.<sup>66</sup> Couples wanted to ensure they had sufficient income to provide for a family and the decision to marry was not taken lightly. The Bacon and Barker families were already connected through the marriage of Emma's half-sister Sophia with Alfred's brother, William.<sup>67</sup> It is likely that this connection played a role in their marriage, especially since both families were well connected and from middle-class backgrounds.<sup>68</sup> During the Victorian period factors other than family background also gained prominence. Affection and love were increasingly seen as important elements in a marriage. Whether they became prime motivators for marriage or were generally established after the fact is debated by historians.<sup>69</sup> It is difficult to deduce feelings between men and women prior to marriage as this was viewed as a deeply private issue. Courtship letters were intended to be seen only by the couple concerned, and could contain heartfelt longings and feelings.<sup>70</sup> In 1871, Alfred wrote his cousin and mentioned that he destroyed all the letters he and Emma had written to each other:

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<sup>64</sup> Jim McAloon, *No Idle Rich: the Wealthy in Canterbury & Otago* (Dunedin: University of Otago Press, 2002), pp. 92-93. On married women's legal rights in nineteenth-century New Zealand, see Bettina Bradbury, 'From Civil Death to Separate Property: Changes in the Legal Rights of Married Women in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand', *New Zealand Journal of History* 29:1 (1995), pp. 40-67.

<sup>65</sup> Family Register: Alfred Charles Barker, 2008.127.168, CM.

<sup>66</sup> Ibid; and Olssen, 'Families and the Gendering of European New Zealand', p. 37.

<sup>67</sup> Letters: Death of Alfred Charles Barker, April 1873, 2008.127.129, CM.

<sup>68</sup> Emma had a five hundred pound marriage settlement, an indication of the privileged background of both families. See, Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 3 Aug 1852, 2008.127.25, CM; and Bradbury, 'From Civil Death to Separate Property,' p. 47.

<sup>69</sup> See, Olssen, 'Families and the Gendering of European New Zealand', p. 50. Olssen suggests love developed after marriage.

<sup>70</sup> Hammerton, *Cruelty and Companionship*, p. 135.

When she left me I was in a very low state of health & not expecting to recover I destroyed all her letters, both those written by her to me & those she had received from her friends. I looked on them as sacred & could not bear the thought that indifferent eyes should scan what was intended for her alone.<sup>71</sup>

This suggests that material of an affectionate nature may have been contained in these letters, which he did not want others to read after his death. Despite the unavailability of this material, some conclusions about their marriage can be drawn by reading the letters to their extended family ‘against the grain.’

Tosh argues that the companionate marriage ideal was in part difficult to fulfil due to differences in education between men and women at the time.<sup>72</sup> Alfred, educated at King’s College, had a more comprehensive education than Emma. Yet, Emma was highly literate and informed on topical issues; she read the papers sent out to New Zealand from England, and it is evident that she and Alfred discussed politics together. As she wrote to her sister in 1855, ‘we take the greatest interest in the war in fact in the whole political state of Europe.’<sup>73</sup> Emma worried about political unrest at home and these fears may have influenced their decision to migrate to New Zealand. In 1852 she wrote to her half-sister Sophia that ‘the state of England causes us anxiety too many times we have wished that our friends, money and all, were safe here.’<sup>74</sup> Davidoff and Hall also suggest that an age difference (with the husband being older and more experienced) further increased disparity within a marriage.<sup>75</sup> Emma and Alfred were close in age, and although Alfred had a university education, the educational gap between them was bridgeable in some cases. Such compatibility is likely to have made a strong foundation for a companionate marriage (see figure 4).

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<sup>71</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to a cousin in England, 26 Aug 1871, 2008.127.125, CM.

<sup>72</sup> Tosh, *A Man’s Place*, p. 26 and pp. 66-67.

<sup>73</sup> Letter: Emma Barker to her sister, 2 Feb 1855, 2008.127.47, CM.

<sup>74</sup> Transcript of a letter: Emma Barker to her sister Sophia, 1852, 2008.127.44, CM.

<sup>75</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 323.



You would be surprised to see the marriages here  
almost every young lady of 16 is engaged I think it  
is quite alarming before their characters are formed  
at all, indeed I should be very sorry to see Elizabeth  
carried off so soon - We take the greatest interest in  
the war in fact in the whole political state of  
Europe. Alfred thinks it is only the beginning of great  
contests which will end in the downfall of Popery  
and the bringing in of the Jews to their Land  
We feel anxious to see what part England will  
bear in the struggle, and feel sorry to see her  
engaged with France on the Infidel & Perverse side  
and can hardly believe she will continue so but  
and England - We were very much struck with the  
fact of Lucien Buonaparte being made a Cardinal  
Alfred thinks that very likely the next Pope will be  
de Buonaparte, you cannot think how interesting  
the papers are to us generally our batch is read over  
and over again before the others come but I must  
send this letter now pray give my best love to all  
and believe me dear as ever  
Your affec<sup>d</sup> Sister  
Emma Barker

Figure 4: An excerpt of one of Emma's letters to her sister, which included a detailed discussion of her and Alfred's thoughts on politics, including the Papacy. Letter: Emma Barker to her sister, 2 February 1855, 2008.127.47, CM.

What was the role that Emma played in the Barker family's decision to migrate to New Zealand? Porter and Macdonald suggest that a married woman's agency was severely restricted in the context of migration and that control over her body and person were under the authority of her husband.<sup>76</sup> Dalziel proposes instead that women recovered their agency when migrating, especially due to their prominent role in the colony.<sup>77</sup> Despite being subsumed within the family, and ultimately under patriarchal authority, Emma's role as an agent in the migration process is clear.<sup>78</sup> In 1850 Emma wrote to her cousin Maria that although she found it 'much more difficult as the time draws near to feel reconciled to it all cheerfully', her 'judgement [was] convinced' about going to New Zealand.<sup>79</sup> This suggests that she had some input into the decision-making process, or that the decision was made by Alfred but that she nevertheless approved of it. Despite this, in writing to Maria, Emma solely mentioned Alfred's aspirations.<sup>80</sup> The Barker family's desire to improve their standing within society is likely to have played a large part in their decision to leave England. Once they arrived in Canterbury, they considered themselves a part of the colonial gentry, and Alfred established himself as a doctor for all the 'best families.'<sup>81</sup> According to Alfred the Barker house on Worcester Street was 'situated in the very best part of town.'<sup>82</sup> Nevertheless, during their first years in colonial New Zealand Alfred's letters were filled with complaints about expenses, and he continuously solicited his father for money.<sup>83</sup> When Alfred died, his estate

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<sup>76</sup> Porter and Macdonald, *'My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates'*, p.7.

<sup>77</sup> Dalziel, 'The Colonial Helpmeet', p. 115.

<sup>78</sup> On women, agency and migration, see, Catherine Bishop, 'Women on the Move: Gender, Money-making and Mobility in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Australasia', *History Australia* 11:2 (2014), pp. 28-59.

<sup>79</sup> Letter: Emma Barker to her cousin Maria, 3 Aug 1850, 2008.127.43, CM.

<sup>80</sup> 'His object is to purchase land and be the first doctor among the Colonists who are all well connected families,' see, Letter: Emma Barker to her cousin Maria, 15 Jun 1850, 2008.127.42, CM. Burdon suggests that Alfred hoped to be able to buy back the Aston property that had belonged to the Barker family until it was sold in 1750, and that his aspirations for buying land stemmed from this goal. See, Burdon, *Dr A.C. Barker 1819-1873*, p. 75.

<sup>81</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to his father Joseph Gibbs Barker, 17 Jun 1851, 2008.127.16, CM. Emma wrote of being invited to a party that a Lady gave 'to all the gentry here', see, Transcript of a letter: Emma Barker to her sister Sophia, 1852, 2008.127.44, CM.

<sup>82</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 17 Jun 1851, 2008.127.16, CM.

<sup>83</sup> For instance see, Letter: Dr Alfred Charles Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 17 Dec 1850, 2008.127.7, CM.



was worth almost £80,000, qualifying him for McAloon's category of the wealthy in colonial Canterbury.<sup>84</sup> This suggests that once Alfred had acquired the means from his father, the Barker family was able to move from the middle class into the wealthy class in colonial Canterbury. These aspirations are further exemplified by Alfred's letter to his father in 1851, written just after they had arrived in New Zealand. In this he wrote: 'I confess we often look back with regret on the happy home we left – but at the same time my reason tells me that it would never have done to have remained as we were.'<sup>85</sup> It is likely that Emma held similar aspirations to Alfred in this respect.

### *Class, Family Structure and Gender*

In what ways did class and family structure impact on gender roles within the Barker family? Alfred was concerned with the family's financial situation and wanted to improve it by migrating to New Zealand. Family finances are a common theme in his letters, with comments on the costs of servants, food, building materials and general items, compared unfavourably with English prices.<sup>86</sup> This strongly suggests that Alfred was in charge of the family finances, as was the norm in middle-class families at the time.<sup>87</sup> His concern was providing for his family and when writing of hardships still to come was hopeful that he could look after Emma: 'I trust I shall be able to shield dear Emma from the worst of them & ensure her at least a roof over her head.'<sup>88</sup> Emma was also concerned about the financial

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<sup>84</sup> Macdonald Dictionary Entry: Alfred Charles Barker, 138/64 (B124), CM; and McAloon, *No Idle Rich*, pp. 15-27. McAloon identifies those who died leaving (until 1918) £10,000 or more as the wealthy. The Barker family also fulfils all the other criteria listed by McAloon: they arrive early; they are married; they buy land; and they emphasise thrift, sobriety, and hard work.

<sup>85</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 27 Jan 1851, 2008.127.10, CM. Alfred was the youngest son in his family and it is likely that he had more opportunities to improve his situation in Canterbury than in England. See, Burdon, *Dr A.C. Barker 1819-1873*, p. 14.

<sup>86</sup> See for instance, Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 19 Feb 1851, 2008.127.11, CM.

<sup>87</sup> McAloon, *No Idle Rich*, pp. 92-93.

<sup>88</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 06 Jan 1851, 2008.127.9, CM.

situation of her family. She wrote to her sister about Alfred's role as a doctor, saying that 'though the practice does not keep us, it helps.'<sup>89</sup> Emma also mentioned the money Alfred earned from being the registrar of births, deaths, and marriages.<sup>90</sup> Both Emma and Alfred wrote of the difficulties in getting patients to pay their bills and that this uncertainty caused them anxiety.<sup>91</sup> It appears that Emma was involved in discussions about finances. When Alfred wrote to his father about 'the difficulty of providing for an increasing family', he noted that 'Emma reminds me of the £500 capital secured to me by the marriage settlement.'<sup>92</sup>

Although Emma mentioned finances, she was generally confined to the role of home-maker while Alfred was the breadwinner in the family. This is a reflection of the main change that occurred during the nineteenth century: the shift away from the family as a productive unit, and the increasing separation of work from the home.<sup>93</sup> This does not mean, however, that Emma did not choose and enjoy this role to some extent. At the same time, domesticity was central to the idea of masculinity during this time. The home was seen as a refuge from the world of work and a place where men's emotional and moral needs were met.<sup>94</sup> There is some indication that Alfred was concerned with domesticity. For example, he did not like the appearance of his house, but wrote: 'I think I shall be able to make it snug within which after all is the main thing.'<sup>95</sup> There is also evidence of him taking on domestic tasks; when Emma was pregnant and the cook ill he, together with his son Richard, swept the rooms, lit the fires and lay the breakfast. However, it appears he did so mostly for Emma: 'Not that I care for such things myself – but Emma is much worried by them – & as she is so near her

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<sup>89</sup> Transcript of a letter: Emma Barker to her sister Sophia, 1852, 2008.127.44, CM.

<sup>90</sup> Letter: Emma Barker to her sister Mary, 15 Nov 1856, 2008.127.48, CM.

<sup>91</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 3 Aug 1852, 2008.127.25, CM; and Letter: Emma Barker to her sister, 2 Feb 1855, 2008.127.47, CM.

<sup>92</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 3 Aug 1852, 2008.127.25, CM. Bradbury argues marriage settlements were one way for women to have more control over various kinds of property, see, Bradbury, 'From Civil Death to Separate Property,' p. 46. However, Emma's control was limited since her step-brother was her trustee and executor. See, Burdon, A.C. *Barker 1819-1873*, p. 77.

<sup>93</sup> Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 13.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid, pp. 30-31.

<sup>95</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 30 Apr 1851, 2008.127.14, CM.

confinement ... it won't do for her to over exert herself.'<sup>96</sup> Alfred's assistance with housework was more of an exception than the norm. As Tosh suggests, men expected their wives to keep 'a clean and well-ordered house.'<sup>97</sup> It demonstrates, however, that Alfred's role in the family cannot be solely confined to the public sphere.

Emma wrote of the draining nature of housework and was glad when they had three servants, writing 'my spirits have been better ever since ... though I have a great deal to see to.'<sup>98</sup> Three servants was the standard for a middle-class family which included a cook, a housemaid and a nursemaid.<sup>99</sup> The number of servants fluctuated for the Barker family, who according to Alfred dealt with a number of incompetent servants.<sup>100</sup> When they hired a new married couple in 1858 Alfred remarked that there was once again "peace in [their] dwelling" something especially appreciated by him, the 'colonial master of the House.'<sup>101</sup> It is likely that Emma managed and issued instructions to the servants.<sup>102</sup> There is a stark contrast between Alfred's description of their peaceful dwelling and Emma's lament at the same time that '[her] family duties are so heavy that writing becomes next to impossible.'<sup>103</sup> The relationship between the Barker family and their servants is a reflection of a change that occurred in the nineteenth century. Historians have pointed to a shift in family structure, where the nuclear family increasingly became the norm. This entailed a separation between

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<sup>96</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Matthias Barker, 10 August 1858, 92/64 (folder 1, item 2), CM.

<sup>97</sup> Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 56.

<sup>98</sup> Letter: Emma Barker to her sister Mary, 15 Nov 1856, 2008.127.48, CM.

<sup>99</sup> Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 19.

<sup>100</sup> Alfred commented in 1858 that he had been blessed 'with the noisiest & most troublesome hussies on the face of the earth that ever went by the name of servants', see, Letter: Alfred Barker to Matthias Barker, 19 April 1858, 92/64 (folder 1, item 1), CM.

<sup>101</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Matthias Barker, 19 April 1858, 92/64 (folder 1, item 1), CM. There was a married couple (the Alfreys) who came out with the Barker family on *the Charlotte Jane*. They had a 15 year- old daughter and stayed with the Barkers in 'Studdingsail Hall'. See, Burdon, *Dr A.C. Barker 1819-1873*, pp. 43-25. Emma wrote on the ship about the Alfreys and a Scottish nurse they met on *the Charlotte Jane*: 'We are fearful the Alfreys will not engage themselves to us, they evidently expect much higher wages than we can give, but until we know what is usual, we say nothing. Mrs Alfrey's temper is violent and discontented, all the rest we like. I hope to keep Mary Anne as a nurse at least and as to the rest it may not be good to run us to needless expense', See, Diary: Emma Barker to her mother and sister Sarah, 1850, 2008.127.1, CM.

<sup>102</sup> See Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 20.

<sup>103</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Matthias Barker, 11 September 1858, 92/64 (folder 1, item 3), CM.

the servants and the rest of the household.<sup>104</sup> The exception to this was a governess or long-serving nanny, which for the Barker family was Anne Bowen. She was from a similar class background, and the Barker's considered her a part of the family. She served as a companion to Emma and a governess for the children, taking on a more prominent role in the household after Emma's death in 1858. Her friendship with Emma also demonstrates the significance of kinship ties in the colony.<sup>105</sup>

Marriage as an institution served to increase the status of both men and women, which also came with certain expectations of respectability and gentility. In this way, the private blended with the public as the nature of one's family and standards of domesticity were central to status.<sup>106</sup> A significant aspect of this was the idea of respectability, which as Heidi Whiteside suggests, could have different connotations for men and women in colonial Canterbury.<sup>107</sup> Alfred, for instance, was concerned with identifying himself as a 'colonist' as opposed to an 'emigrant', the former being associated with certain qualities.<sup>108</sup> James Edward Fitzgerald wrote to Richard Barker after his father's death, telling him that it was Alfred's 'dearest wish' that his family would emulate 'by their life and character the spirit in which the first Colonists of Canterbury landed.'<sup>109</sup> Alfred differentiated himself from the 'emigrants' on the *Charlotte Jane* who were from the working classes and could not afford to stay in cabins.<sup>110</sup> In this way he aligned the 'character and spirit' of colonists with certain notions of class, and

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<sup>104</sup> See for instance, Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 20.

<sup>105</sup> See for instance, letter: Alfred Barker to sisters (Misses Bacon), 3 October 1858, 92/64 (folder 1, item 4), CM; and Letter: Alfred Barker to Matthias Barker, 3 October 1860, 92/64 (folder 2, item 17), CM. Miss Anne Bowen was the sister of Charles Christopher Bowen, later provincial treasurer and Minister of the Crown. Alfred formed a life-long friendship with Charles Bowen and his family during his time in Rugby. Miss Bowen later formed a friendship with Emma and the Barker children. She was also a passenger on *the Charlotte Jane*, and she looked after the Barker children after Emma's death. See, Burdon, *Dr A.C. Barker 1819-1873*, p. 56; Transcript: Memories of A.C. Barker for his grandchildren, circa 1978, 2008.127.215, CM; and Transcript: Lizzie's notes from brown book, circa 1978, 2008.127.216, CM.

<sup>106</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 397.

<sup>107</sup> Heidi Whiteside, 'We Shall Be Respectable: Women and Representations of Respectability in Lyttleton 1851-1893', MA Thesis, University of Canterbury, 2007, pp. 23-24.

<sup>108</sup> Diary: Alfred Barker, 1850, 2008.127.2, CM.

<sup>109</sup> Transcript and reminiscences: Sarah Elizabeth Hawdon (née Barker), 28 April 1873, 2008.127.171, CM.

<sup>110</sup> Rogers, *Illustrated History of Canterbury*, pp. 42-43.

therefore respectability. Whiteside suggests that respectability for women, on the other hand, 'entailed a consciousness of how they appeared to others.'<sup>111</sup> This anxiety was tied to status and expressed through an 'adherence to a collection of moral values and core concepts based on gendered expectations relating to behaviour and appearance.'<sup>112</sup> It is significant that Emma wrote about respectability as an aspect of something social – a public ideal. When 'a Lady' in the area had a large party, Emma was reluctant to indulge herself but confessed that 'Mrs Godley said if we only showed ourselves it was enough: thus we have our temptations.'<sup>113</sup> This was arguably a conflicting situation for Emma since Victorian ideals of self-restraint were at odds with the conduct required by appearing respectable in public. It demonstrates that middle-class notions of gentility gave rise to different gendered expressions of respectability.

### ***Religion and Gender***

Religion was another factor that shaped the gendered aspects of marriage in the nineteenth century. The reason Emma did not want to attend the party was that it was not morally appropriate; she did not want to attend another for 'as this was the first, it must be the last, for if we lose in earthly esteem, God can make it up to us in peace of mind.'<sup>114</sup> Such notions of self-discipline and restraint stemmed from Evangelicalism.<sup>115</sup> Marriage as an institution was central to religious beliefs about the moral value family life. The family provided a moral path for both children and adults and was supported by the authority of religion.<sup>116</sup> Domestic life in this sense gained a moral quality and the 'custodians of this moral flame were the

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<sup>111</sup> Whiteside, 'We Shall Be Respectable', p. 25.

<sup>112</sup> Ibid, p. 26.

<sup>113</sup> Transcript of a letter: Emma Barker to her sister Sophia, 1852, 2008.127.44, CM.

<sup>114</sup> Ibid.

<sup>115</sup> For a history of the Evangelical movement in Britain see, D.W. Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain: A History From the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd., 1989).

<sup>116</sup> Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 29.

women of the home.<sup>117</sup> This idea structured marriage and husbands looked to their wives for moral guidance and support. Shoemaker suggests that there is evidence of women taking over from men in matters of family religiosity.<sup>118</sup> Religion could therefore be viewed as restrictive for women, in the sense that it is a form of self-denial. There is indeed a religious tone in many of Emma's letters, although it appears to have held a less restrictive function for her than the gendered ideals of Evangelicalism would suggest. Emma drew on her faith in times of uncertainty and loneliness. Before departing for New Zealand she relied heavily on God to comfort her and at 'the prospect of leaving all [her] friends' she wrote: 'I trust all will be settled and that God will give us strength equal to our day.' She used strong imagery to depict her eventual reunion with her family in heaven: 'if we never meet again upon earth may we all join in a happier [?] realm above.'<sup>119</sup> On the voyage to New Zealand, Emma wrote of the comfort that the idea of friends praying for her at home gave her.<sup>120</sup> Once her mother passed away in 1856, Emma recorded, 'we have indeed much to be thankful for in her quiet and peaceful death may we all meet her in another world.'<sup>121</sup> Nevertheless religion could not always comfort her. She wrote to her sister in 1855 about her 'low spirits', and that she questioned her faith at times:

I never liked to say so because though I feel the want of [?] a sister dreadfully, I knew I could not expect it and blame myself much for not being happier however you must not mention this, as I am stronger now and hope to abound more in that Christian joy which should raise one above a desponding [?] way of dwelling upon our trials instead of recounting the mercies of the Lord.<sup>122</sup>

In the passage there is a sense she should be more emotionally resilient, which was a particular aspect of gendered respectability in the colonies.<sup>123</sup> While religion arguably gave

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<sup>117</sup> Ibid, p. 55.

<sup>118</sup> Ibid, and Shoemaker, *Gender in English Society*, p. 122.

<sup>119</sup> Letter: Emma Barker to her cousin Maria, 15 Jun 1850, 2008.127.42, CM.

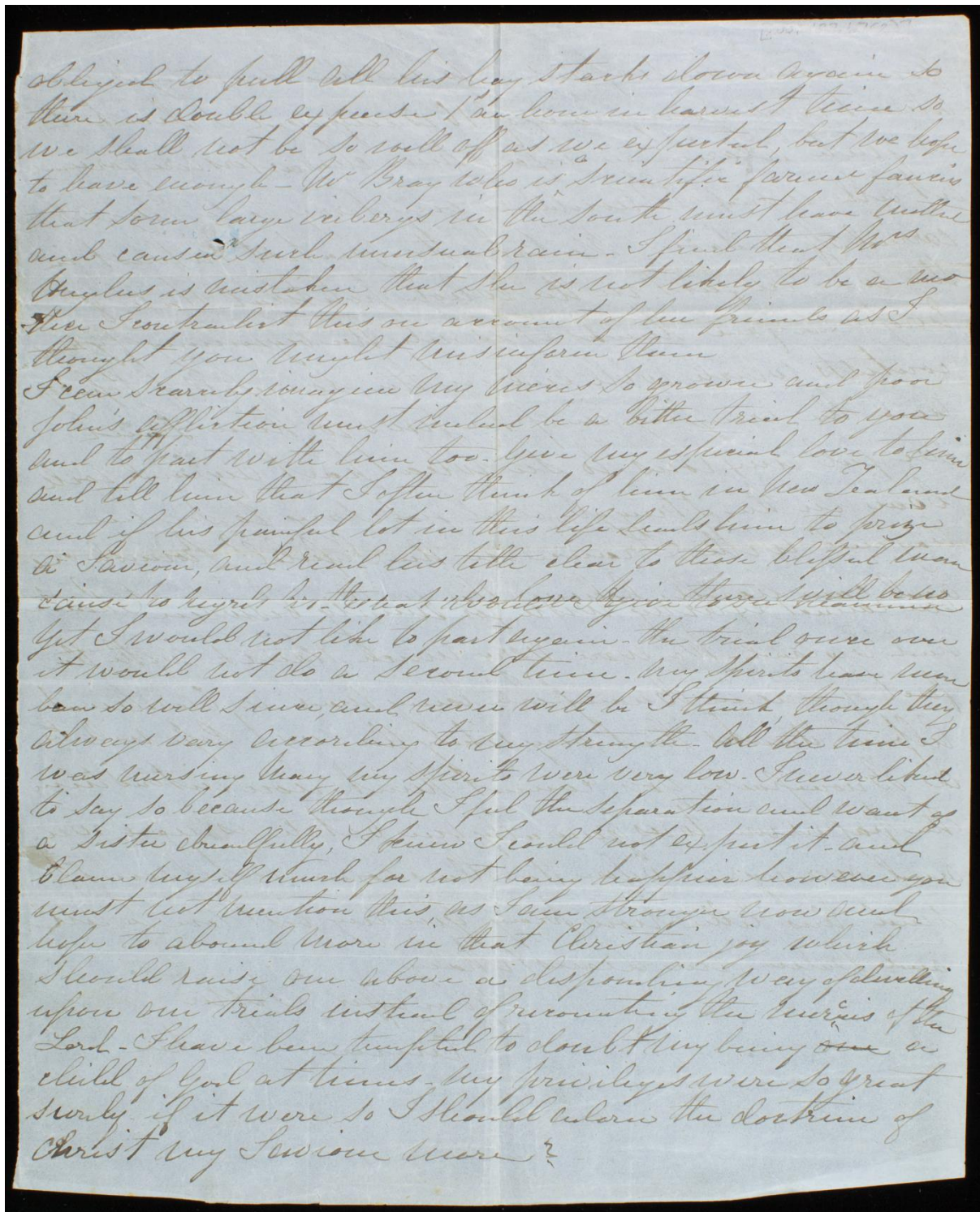
<sup>120</sup> Diary: Emma Barker to her mother and sister Sarah, 1850, 2008.127.1, CM.

<sup>121</sup> Letter: Emma Barker to her sister Mary, 15 Nov 1856, 2008.127.48, CM.

<sup>122</sup> Letter: Emma Barker to her sister, 2 Feb 1855, 2008.127.47, CM.

<sup>123</sup> Whiteside, 'We Shall Be Respectable', p. 26.

Emma a sense of comfort, it also restricted her in that it left little room for emotional vulnerability (see figure 5).



obliged to pull all his hay stacks down again so  
there is double expense & in some in harvest & time so  
we shall not be so well off as we expected, but we hope  
to have enough - Mr Bray tells us scientific farmers favour  
that some large incursions in the south must have weather  
and caused such unusual rain. I find that Mrs  
Douglas is mistaken that she is not likely to be a mo-  
ther Southernist this on account of her friends as I  
thought you might misinform them  
I fear I am becoming very weak & groggy and poor  
John's affliction must indeed be a bitter trial to you  
and to part with him too. Give my especial love to him  
and tell him that I often think of him in New Zealand  
and if his painful lot in this life leads him to prize  
a Saviour, and read his bible clear to those blessed man-  
tains to keep his heart whole & pure. I will be so  
yet I would not like to part again - the trial over  
it would not do a second time. My spirits have been  
low so well since, and never will be I think though they  
always vary according to my strength. All the time I  
was nursing Mary my spirits were very low. I never liked  
to say so because though I feel the separation and want of  
a sister dreadfully, I knew I could not expect it, and  
blame myself much for not being happier however you  
must not mention this, as I am stronger now and  
hope to abound more in that Christian joy which  
I should raise me above a disponding way of dwelling  
upon our trials instead of recounting the mercies of the  
Lord. I have been tempted to doubt my being one or  
child of God at times. My privileges were so great  
surely if it were so I should believe the doctrine of  
Christ my Saviour more?

Figure 5: Emma wrote to her sister about her 'low spirits', which exemplifies the consolatory function of migrant letters.  
Letter: Emma Barker to her sister, 2 February 1855, 2008.127.47, CM.



Although the gendered aspects of migration made many aspects more testing for women, men also felt lonely and despondent. Alfred, like Emma, invoked religious imagery when he wrote to his father at the start of their voyage, suggesting that they both felt a degree of sadness at leaving their family and friends behind. Alfred, however, seemed to find some distraction through his employment and conveyed that ‘the bustle of [his] every day duties soon dissipated these reflections.’<sup>124</sup> When news arrived of his father’s illness in 1852, Alfred expressed his worry that such difficult times ‘make one feel most keenly the distance that separates us.’<sup>125</sup> It is particularly after Emma’s death in 1858 that the tone of despondency increased. Alfred continued to rely on religion, evident in a letter to his brother Matthias soon after Emma passed away: ‘I need not tell you the fearful desolation I am in may God guide me ... in my difficult task.’<sup>126</sup> It is especially the idea of Emma’s Evangelical ‘good death’ which comforted Alfred.<sup>127</sup> She was at home, surrounded by her loved ones and ‘through all the trying time she was upheld by her Saviour’s love.’<sup>128</sup> He took a photograph of Emma’s peaceful expression after she died, ‘as the happiest memento I could have of one so well deserving of my deepest love.’<sup>129</sup> Such expressions could be interpreted as merely conventional, but this is not likely to have been the case. As Pat Jalland argues, although family correspondence conveying news of death was influenced by the Evangelical movement, it was often written during an emotional time, and not deliberately edited.<sup>130</sup> Nearly ten years after Emma’s death Alfred wrote to Matthias of his loneliness:

I wish I could see you all again but I fear it is impossible – I some times have the longing to revisit old haunts once more very strong upon me. I wish we knew whether departed spirits can or cannot revisit the spots they loved on earth – I fear not – otherwise how I

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<sup>124</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 4 Sep 1850, 2008.127.3, CM.

<sup>125</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 7 Jun 1852, 2008.127.23, CM.

<sup>126</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Matthias Barker, 4 October 1858, 92/64 (folder 1, item 5), CM.

<sup>127</sup> On the Evangelical ‘good death,’ see, Pat Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 1-38.

<sup>128</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Matthias Barker, 3 October 1858, 92/64 (folder 1, item 4), CM.

<sup>129</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Matthias Barker, 4 October 1858, 92/64 (folder 1, item 5), CM.

<sup>130</sup> Jalland, *Death in the Victorian Family*, p. 25.



should long to be at rest. As I sit in this room – the little drawing room I can almost fancy dear Emma is standing by me as in days long gone by – now nearly ten years & the hopeless longing feeling seems to surge over me in my loneliness – I do not wish to be unthankful I have many many mercies – the children are ... careful comforts to me.<sup>131</sup>

Alfred expressed genuine distress and used affectionate language to speak about Emma (see figure 6).

My dear Mat  
[104]  
Chichester Jan 1/68  
I am deeply sorry to  
hear of your illness after noon - all my  
right wishes being for your recovery  
on the face of the country.  
Dick, Sam & Arthur, as dear  
Francis, as well as Helen, May  
Lizzy & Willy as a child  
& John & Willy as a child  
watch in Hays Park, but  
we to sit down & leave a visit  
short with you at the Antelope  
- got you a letter of Oct 29. 67. a  
few days ago - containing a great  
number of Henry's dearest letters  
- however I can't revise them - as  
cannot now revise them - as  
Henry in his letter to me announced  
that he accepted my account as  
correct (I wonder if he knew of the  
mistake in the edition!!) so that  
when my copy of £7. 10. 0 at 32. 11. 0  
I must have up with it.

eyes as long as God I have them to me  
but I plainly perceive I shall follow  
quit with Henry & William - I  
wish I could see you all again but I  
fear it is impossible - I must turn  
have the company to visit it all  
parents once more - very sorry upon  
me - I wish we knew whether  
departs spirits can a comfort visit  
the spots they loved on earth - I can  
not - then we have I should long  
to be at rest - as I wish this room  
the little drawing room I can almost  
fancy dear Emma sitting at the  
fire in days long gone by - now nearly ten years  
of the happy, happy feeling seems to  
surge over me in my loneliness -  
I do not wish to be unthankful I have  
many many mercies - the children are  
near though careful comforts to me -  
I wish I see how while so many are  
dying around me I am still so near a  
sufficiency & beauty of life - I have  
just put up with me I should indeed be

Figure 6: Letter illustrating Alfred's grief about Emma's death, some ten years later. Letter: Alfred Barker to Matthias Barker, 1 January 1868, 92/64 (Folder 10, item 104), CM.

<sup>131</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Matthias Barker, 1 January 1868, 92/64 (Folder 10, item 104), CM.

This suggests that the companionate ideal as expressed through a marriage based on love was to an extent realised in the marriage of Alfred and Emma. In 1871, Alfred wrote of his lasting grief about Emma's death:

Since that time of terrible trouble I have lived alone – & though I have many kind friends & good children – yet they belong to a world utterly dissociated from that in which I walked with her during the few years she was spared to me.<sup>132</sup>

This expression illustrates the ideal of the companionate marriage in which Emma and Alfred 'walked' together, side by side (see figure 7).

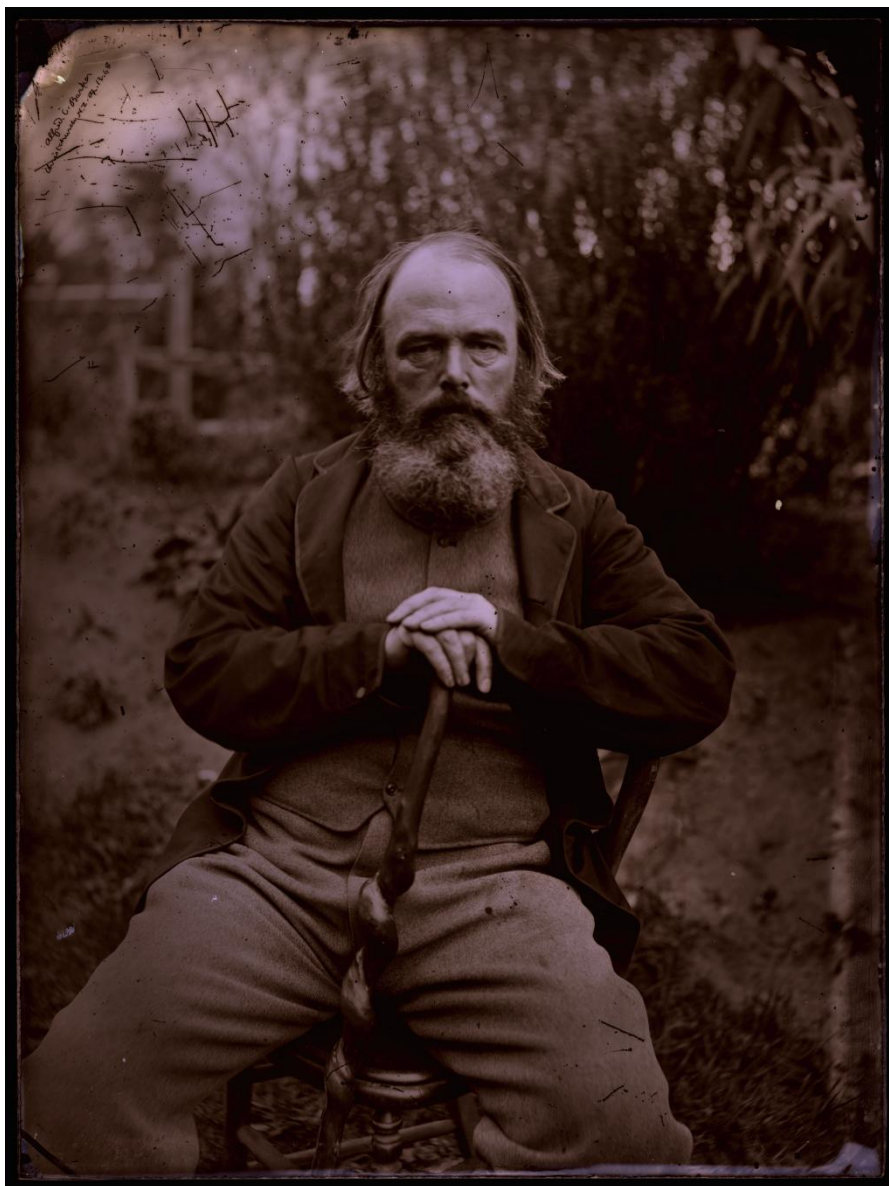


Figure 7: Alfred took a number of haunting self-portraits in the years following Emma's death. Portrait: Alfred Barker, 13 April 1868, 2008.127.268, CM.

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<sup>132</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to a cousin in England, 26 Aug 1871, 2008.127.125, CM.

## *Conclusion*

Feelings of affection and love were evident in Alfred's correspondence following Emma's death. At the same time their marriage gave rise to certain gendered roles and divisions. Alfred was largely in charge of the finances as the 'Colonial Master of the House,' while Emma was concerned with domestic duties.<sup>133</sup> Although Emma's domestic duties were heavy, and she expressed feelings of loneliness, religion was her solace and comfort. Such feelings of despondency were also expressed by Alfred, illustrating that migration could prove difficult for both men and women. Being a good husband blended with the middle-class public ideal of masculinity and was contingent on it. In this way the public blended with the private, and exemplified the nuance of gendered experiences of migration.

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<sup>133</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Matthias Barker, 19 April 1858, 92/64 (folder 1, item 1), CM.

## CHAPTER TWO

### **‘I hope they will grow up good boys fearing God’: Parenthood in the Barker Family**

Childrearing was a significant facet of Emma and Alfred’s marriage, and mostly an enjoyable one. Emma and Alfred each had different experiences and roles as a mother and father, which shaped their experience of migration. Migration was a chance for families to improve their situation in the world, and it is for this reason that children were central to the migration process. The Barker children’s ongoing connections with extended family in England illustrate the significance of a wider kinship network. In many ways Emma and Alfred’s accounts of parenthood can illuminate the aspirations and hopes of middle-class migrant families in colonial New Zealand. Although they were subject to different gendered expectations, they both enjoyed parenthood and loved their children dearly.

Certain ideas about motherhood and fatherhood were defining elements of the companionate marriage ideal. During the nineteenth century the family was elevated as a microcosm of the Church, and seen as the ‘one place where moral order could be maintained.’<sup>134</sup> The status of the mother was especially important within this construct. Mothers were thought to have moral resources that fathers lacked, although middle-class fatherhood also had a moral and religious function.<sup>135</sup> During the nineteenth century, sex and childbirth were inextricably linked with marriage and embodied by it, which meant that raising children together was an important facet of marriage.<sup>136</sup> For Emma and Alfred, securing future prospects for their children played an important role in their decision to migrate to Canterbury. Despite her demanding domestic duties, Emma gained satisfaction from motherhood and loved her children exceedingly. She derived a great deal of enjoyment from her children and mentioned

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<sup>134</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 89.

<sup>135</sup> John Tosh, ‘Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood: the Case of Early and Mid-Victorian England’, *Gender & History* 8:1 (1996), pp. 51-52.

<sup>136</sup> Porter and Macdonald, ‘*My Hand Will Write What my Heart Dictates*’, p. 338.

them many times in her letters. Although Alfred did not mention his children to the same extent, it is clear that they were important to him and that he valued their presence in his life.<sup>137</sup> The gendered roles of motherhood and fatherhood in colonial New Zealand demonstrate the nuance of personal experience for Emma and Alfred. Emma's love for her children and the joys she experienced through motherhood counteract Porter and Macdonald's 'unsettlement' thesis.<sup>138</sup> Furthermore, an analysis of parenthood highlights the importance of family in the migration process. The family network was strong and accentuated the connections made by the Barker family in colonial Canterbury.

Historians explored middle-class Victorian constructions of parenthood from the late 1970s onwards, although it is still rare for historians to consider motherhood and fatherhood together.<sup>139</sup> Fatherhood has especially been neglected, since middle-class Victorian masculinity is mostly examined outside of the private sphere of the home and the family.<sup>140</sup> John Tosh notes that fatherhood highlights the tension within the Victorian family ideal. Although the companionate marriage valued the domestic role of the father, it also rested primarily on the separate spheres framework.<sup>141</sup> The most influential text to explore this tension has been Davidoff and Hall's *Family Fortunes*, which portrays middle-class Victorian fathers as benign and nurturing.<sup>142</sup> This was a significant departure from previous

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<sup>137</sup> Alfred's letters from after 1858 have not been analysed extensively in this dissertation, but they could have provided more insight into his relationship with his children. Since Emma is the focus of this study, such analysis is beyond the scope of this dissertation.

<sup>138</sup> Porter and Macdonald, 'My Hand Will Write What my Heart Dictates', pp. 4-5.

<sup>139</sup> For exceptions see for instance, Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*; and Michael Roper and John Tosh, eds., *Manful Assertions: Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (London: Routledge, 1991).

<sup>140</sup> For an early exception see, David Newsome, *Godliness and Good Learning: Four Studies on a Victorian Ideal* (London: John Murray, 1961). More recent works include Megan Doolittle, 'Missing Fathers: Assembling a History of Fatherhood in Mid-Nineteenth Century England,' PhD thesis, University of Essex, 1996; Roper and Tosh, *Manful Assertions*; Tosh, *a Man's Place*; Tosh, 'Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood'; and Trev Lynn Broughton and Helen Rogers, eds., *Gendered Fatherhood in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).

<sup>141</sup> Tosh, 'Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood', p. 49.

<sup>142</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 329.

dichotomous representations of fathers as either tyrannical or absent figures.<sup>143</sup> Tosh has most recently offered a more dynamic portrayal of fatherhood.<sup>144</sup> He proposes that the provision for, and protection of, children and the exercise of authority over them was central to the Victorian father's role. A commitment to family life was required from men as it was tied to ideas of middle-class respectability. Although a sense of playfulness and nurture became more important for the middle-class Victorian father, Tosh argues that this shift was counteracted by the much stronger elevation of the Victorian mother.<sup>145</sup> The importance of the authority of the father was superseded by the influence of the mother who, by the 1830s, was seen to be 'the moral force of family life, with her own spirituality and her own genius for the management of children.'<sup>146</sup> Children's characters were thought to play an important role in reforming society and mothers were involved with the personal and emotional care which was to shape children's characters for the better.<sup>147</sup>

The gendered nature of parenthood has been largely neglected by historians of nineteenth-century colonial New Zealand. Although general gendered divisions have been examined, the specific nature of motherhood and fatherhood has not received much attention. In writing about Irish migrants McCarthy states that 'the literature analysing the quality of the relationship between parents and children is thin.'<sup>148</sup> There is some literature on pregnancy and childbirth, despite the reticence of Victorians about such issues.<sup>149</sup> Porter and Macdonald emphasise the burdens of motherhood and how little choice wives had in matters of

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<sup>143</sup> Tosh, 'Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood', p. 60.

<sup>144</sup> Tosh describes four patterns of fatherhood: absent, tyrannical, distant, and intimate. See, Tosh, *a Man's Place*, pp. 95-101. Broughton and Rogers develop this further by suggesting that fatherhood is a process and that all four patterns could occur over a lifetime. See, Broughton and Rogers, *Gendered Fatherhood in the Nineteenth Century*, p. 21.

<sup>145</sup> Tosh, *a Man's Place*, pp. 89-91.

<sup>146</sup> Ibid, p. 90.

<sup>147</sup> Tosh, 'Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood', p. 56, and Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 335 and p. 343.

<sup>148</sup> McCarthy, *Irish Migrants in New Zealand*, p. 181.

<sup>149</sup> See Porter and Macdonald, 'My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates'; and Alison Clarke, *Born to a Changing World: Childbirth in Nineteenth-Century New Zealand* (Wellington: Bridget Williams Books Limited, 2012).



pregnancy. They state ‘the arrival of a (or, more commonly *another*), child’ as a source of unsettlement for women.<sup>150</sup> More recently, Alison Clarke has written about childbirth in nineteenth-century New Zealand and emphasises the diversity of birthing practices during this time.<sup>151</sup> The high birth rate in New Zealand meant that childbearing was a significant facet of early colonial life and young married couples were the most desirable settlers for the colony. Porter and Macdonald write about the experience of motherhood, suggesting that ‘bearing children within marriage took its toll – but often brought joy as well.’<sup>152</sup> They emphasise that parenthood took on a different meaning in the colony, since parents used their children to assess the success of their new society. On the one hand, the freedoms of colonial life provoked anxieties about children’s sophistication, while on the other hand some parents welcomed such an environment for their children.<sup>153</sup> Porter and Macdonald argue that relationships between children and parents may have been more affectionate in families who emigrated and began a new life together. They specify that it was particularly motherhood which was affected by changes in understanding about childhood and parenthood.<sup>154</sup> They do not specifically discuss the gendered constructions of motherhood and fatherhood in New Zealand and what duties these roles entailed. Fatherhood is only mentioned to the extent that husbands are depicted as mainly absent figures.<sup>155</sup>

I will therefore use depictions of parenthood in both English and New Zealand literature and discuss how these applied to the Barker family in nineteenth-century New Zealand. The first part of this chapter investigates the links between parenthood and migration. In the second section, I examine how pregnancy and childbirth shaped Emma’s migration story. In the third

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<sup>150</sup> Porter and Macdonald, ‘My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates’, p. 4.

<sup>151</sup> See, Clarke, *Born to a Changing World*.

<sup>152</sup> Porter and Macdonald, ‘My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates’, p. 342.

<sup>153</sup> *Ibid*, p. 381.

<sup>154</sup> *Ibid*, p. 382.

<sup>155</sup> *Ibid*, p. 20.

and fourth sections, Emma and Alfred's respective experiences of motherhood and fatherhood are explored (see figure 8). Lastly, I consider the significance of family networks.



Figure 8: Photograph of Alfred and Emma with their six eldest children. Their house on Worcester Street is featured in the background. Barker family, ca. 1856, 2002.144.15, CM.



### *Parenthood and Migration*

In the migration process, parenthood and childhood become linked with the broader idea of family networks. Migration meant, however, that one's extended family was not there for support if family duties became overwhelming.<sup>156</sup> To what extent were connections with extended family maintained? What was their impact on the children who migrated to New Zealand with their parents? Depictions by Porter and Macdonald and Miles Fairburn suggest that migration was an alienating experience.<sup>157</sup> McCarthy and Fitzpatrick on the other hand emphasise the dense kinship networks of Irish migrants in Australia and New Zealand.<sup>158</sup> McCarthy points out that since Porter and Macdonald mainly use accounts from middle-class English women, perhaps their experience of migration differed from those of Irish migrants.<sup>159</sup> There is not enough material available about the kinship networks of English migrants to suggest that Porter and Macdonald's depiction holds true for English women generally. The letters written by the Barker family suggest that a degree of moral consolation was derived from the correspondence with family and friends. Furthermore, the Barker children maintained the connections with their extended family well into adulthood, suggesting that their wider kinship network remained important.

Both Alfred and Emma were concerned about their children's futures, and like many migrants they hoped that life in New Zealand would improve their children's prospects.<sup>160</sup> An 1861 article in the *Wellington Independent* stated that members of the 'uneasy' class 'must have come with a reasonable expectation of seeing their children attain a better position that

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<sup>156</sup> Ibid, p. 382 and p. 386.

<sup>157</sup> See *ibid*; and Miles Fairburn, *the Ideal Society and its Enemies: the Foundations of Modern New Zealand Society, 1850-1900* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 1989), p. 94.

<sup>158</sup> See McCarthy, *Irish Migrants in New Zealand*; and Fitzpatrick, *Oceans of Consolation*.

<sup>159</sup> McCarthy, *Irish Migrants in New Zealand*, p. 169.

<sup>160</sup> Porter and Macdonald, 'My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates', p. 382.

either they or their children could, as a class, reasonably expect to arrive at home.’<sup>161</sup> As Alfred wrote, ‘there is hope at the bottom [in New Zealand] which there was not in England.’<sup>162</sup> Alfred sought to advance his position, and that of his sons, whom he and Emma were most invested in, through sheep and cattle farming.<sup>163</sup> Emma mentioned farming as one of the key elements to her sons’ prospects and confessed that ‘neither Richard nor Sammy will be clever enough for professions we think.’<sup>164</sup> Although Emma missed her extended family she mused that ‘as much as I desire to return to England on my own account – our boys will do better here no doubt.’<sup>165</sup> Emma’s worries about her daughters’ futures were of a different nature. She wrote of young ladies getting engaged at 16 years old in the colony and that she wouldn’t like Sarah Elizabeth ‘carried off so soon.’<sup>166</sup> Tosh points out that fathers were particularly invested in the future of their sons since ‘fatherhood offered men the promise of a place in posterity.’<sup>167</sup> Sons carried on the family name and their level of masculinity was a reflection of their father. Masculinity in this sense was not only tied to manly characteristics but also one’s position and status. According to Davidoff and Hall, however, the goals associated with fatherhood and rearing children ‘were not necessarily aimed at forming a family dynasty in the gentry mould.’<sup>168</sup> Alfred was clearly concerned with the future status and position of his children. In 1854 Alfred mused that he wanted to buy some more land outside the Canterbury block ‘as a further investment for the children.’<sup>169</sup> After his spinal injury in 1855, he became more concerned about his property as a provision

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<sup>161</sup> ‘The Uneasy Class,’ *Wellington Independent*, September 17, 1861, p. 2, Accessed September 10, 2015, <http://paperspast.natlib.govt.nz/cgi-bin/paperspast?a=d&d=W18610917.2.6>.

<sup>162</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 27 Sep 1854, 2008.127.34, CM.

<sup>163</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 30 Apr 1851, 2008.127.14, CM. A focus on sons was common among the middle class, see, Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 332; Porter and Macdonald, ‘My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates,’ p. 384; and Tosh, ‘Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood,’ p. 50.

<sup>164</sup> Letter: Emma Barker to her sister Mary, 15 Nov 1856, 2008.127.48, CM.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid

<sup>166</sup> Letter: Emma Barker to her sister, 2 Feb 1855, 2008.127.47, CM.

<sup>167</sup> Tosh, ‘Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood,’ p. 50.

<sup>168</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*, p. 335.

<sup>169</sup> Letter: Dr Alfred Charles Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 30 Apr 1854, 2008.127.33.

for both himself and the children.<sup>170</sup> Furthermore, his use of the word ‘children’ suggests that he was also invested in his daughters’ welfare.

### ***Pregnancy and Childbirth***

Emma and Alfred had eight children together, five of whom were born in New Zealand. Emma’s experience of migration was therefore heavily affected by both pregnancy and childbirth. Pregnancy was discussed very discreetly by the Victorians and euphemisms were often used in correspondence with family and friends.<sup>171</sup> Alfred wrote to his father in 1851 that Emma was ‘taken ill ... & at 12 was confined – of a fine little girl.’<sup>172</sup> When he asked his father for money later that year Alfred expressed his concern about Emma, ‘who is I think in the family way again.’<sup>173</sup> Emma mentioned pregnancy to her sister Sophia in 1852 saying ‘you will be glad to hear that baby is just walking off and there is no more coming at present.’<sup>174</sup> Porter and Macdonald assert that ‘pregnancy and birth were not, in themselves, joyous.’<sup>175</sup> Emma’s statement could be interpreted as a reflection of this, although since this was the only mention she made about pregnancy it is difficult to gauge the true extent of her feelings about the subject. Porter and Macdonald argue that the mortal danger of childbirth and pregnancy in the nineteenth century informed the way women talked about it. Clarke, however, places this fear within the broader context of high mortality rates, suggesting

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<sup>170</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Matthias Barker, 19 April 1858, 92/64 (Folder 1, item 1), CM; and Letter: Alfred Barker to Matthias Barker, 10 August 1858, 92/64 (Folder 1, item 2), CM.

<sup>171</sup> Clarke, *Born to a Changing World*, p. xv; and Porter and Macdonald, ‘My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates,’ pp. 338-339.

<sup>172</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 19 Mar 1851, 2008.127.13, CM.

<sup>173</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 24 Dec 1851, 2008.127.18, CM.

<sup>174</sup> Transcript of a letter: Emma Barker to her sister Sophia, 1852, 2008.127.44, CM.

<sup>175</sup> Porter and Macdonald, ‘My Hand Will Write What My Heart Dictates,’ p. 338.

women may have been more mentally prepared for death.<sup>176</sup> The absence of any mention of childbirth by Emma could be an indication of such an acceptance of the possibility of death.

As Tosh points out, childbirth became more central to motherhood during the nineteenth century.<sup>177</sup> What was Alfred's role during this time? While Emma was pregnant, Alfred was concerned with providing for her. When they first arrived in Canterbury this meant securing a house 'for dear Emma who is near her confinement.'<sup>178</sup> Emma ended up staying in Sumner with the children while Alfred tried to organise a property on the Canterbury plains. It is unclear what Alfred's role was during childbirth. Clarke contends that 'pākehā men clearly saw childbirth as women's business,' and that they assisted when there was no other option.<sup>179</sup> Due to Alfred's profession as a surgeon, he may have been more involved during childbirth itself. Alfred was present for the births of his children in England, although it is unclear whether he was acting in the capacity of a surgeon, or as a husband and a father.<sup>180</sup> Whether this changed in Canterbury is uncertain, although doctors could certainly be useful during childbirth, even without much specialist knowledge on the subject.<sup>181</sup> Furthermore, Tosh points out that it was more common for fathers to attend the births of their children by the 1840s, which was partly a statement about paternity.<sup>182</sup> Alfred also expressed anxiety about mother and child after the birth of Sarah Elizabeth: 'however at present [I] thank God for it [Emma] is doing far better than she ever has done at any other confinements & the little girl also.'<sup>183</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Ibid, p. 341; and Clarke, *Born to a Changing World*, p. 177.

<sup>177</sup> Tosh, *a Man's Place*, p. 81.

<sup>178</sup> Letter: Alfred and Emma Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 17 Dec 1850, 2008.127.7, CM.

<sup>179</sup> Clarke, *Born to a Changing World*, p. 58.

<sup>180</sup> It is possible that he was acting in a combination of these roles. There was also a nurse present see, Family Register: Alfred Charles Barker, 2008.127.168, CM.

<sup>181</sup> See, Clarke, *Born to a Changing World*, pp. 32-44.

<sup>182</sup> Tosh, *a Man's Place*, p. 82.

<sup>183</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 19 Mar 1851, 2008.127.13, CM.

## *Motherhood*

Despite her reticence about pregnancy and childbirth, Emma wrote extensively about her children once they were born. She mentioned her children's views about immigrating and, before leaving for Canterbury, lamented that 'children always think a change must be for good. I quite envy them their childish confidence.'<sup>184</sup> Middle-class Victorian parents derived a great deal of enjoyment from their children.<sup>185</sup> During their journey on the *Charlotte Jane* Emma's enjoyment is especially evident. She mentioned how Richard and Sammy pretended to be sailors during rough weather and wrote to her sister, Sarah: 'how you would laugh to [see] Dicky and Sammy call out as the sailors do.'<sup>186</sup> Emma's privileged position meant that she had a wet nurse on board the *Charlotte Jane*, 'a Scotch woman.'<sup>187</sup> They also used preserved milk and cow's milk.<sup>188</sup> During a time when breastfeeding was common, having a wet nurse and feeding by hand were signs of status.<sup>189</sup> Babies who were hand fed were prone to illness and malnutrition contributed significantly to infant mortality rates in New Zealand in the nineteenth century.<sup>190</sup> There were other diseases which could be deadly for infants. On board the ship, baby Arthur was ill with teething, a condition which could be fatal, and Emma expressed her concerns about the baby's wellbeing.<sup>191</sup> It is unclear what means Emma used in New Zealand to feed her children, although her status may have meant that she continued with assisted methods.

Middle-class Victorian mothers were not only concerned with their children's physical wellbeing, but they were occupied with religious instruction and moulding the temperament

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<sup>184</sup> Letter: Emma Barker to cousin Maria, 3 Aug 1850, 2008.127.43, CM.

<sup>185</sup> Tosh, *a Man's Place*, p. 39.

<sup>186</sup> Ibid; and Diary: Emma Barker to her mother and sister Sarah, 1850, 2008.127.1, CM.

<sup>187</sup> Diary: Emma Barker to her mother and sister Sarah, 1850, 2008.127.1, CM.

<sup>188</sup> Diary: Emma Barker to her mother and sister Sarah, 1850, 2008.127.1, CM.

<sup>189</sup> Although Clarke notes that hand feeding could also indicate low status, and could also be due to a lack of milk by the mother. See, Clarke *Born to a Changing World*, p. 112.

<sup>190</sup> Ibid, p. 119.

<sup>191</sup> Diary: Emma Barker to her mother and sister Sarah, 1850, 2008.127.1, CM.

and characteristics of their children.<sup>192</sup> The mother became more important during the Victorian era as Evangelical doctrine informed the notion that children's spirits were corruptible.<sup>193</sup> There was a particular focus on the masculinity of boys, centered on moral qualities like 'self-government'.<sup>194</sup> The contents of Emma's letters suggest that she was anxious about how her children, especially her sons, were developing as individuals. Before coming to Canterbury she expressed her concerns about Richard's 'weakly health & violent tempers.'<sup>195</sup> She went on to say that 'at times he is very good and says much that makes me very hopeful, at other times he seems poisoned [?] with a spirit of contrariness.'<sup>196</sup> Once in Canterbury she wrote to her sister about Richard, commenting that 'he is still delicate and irritable but he strives against his temper.'<sup>197</sup> Emma also harboured anxieties about her children becoming too 'rough' or 'colonial'. Although the children had much physical freedom in Canterbury, at the same time Emma endeavoured 'to keep them from being colonial or vulgar in their habits,' which meant that they didn't associate with many other children.<sup>198</sup> As Emma imparted: 'there are very few of the schoolboys whom I like as companions for them.'<sup>199</sup>

The main source of discipline Emma used was religion, both in assuaging Richard's temper and in augmenting the general moral qualities of her children. As she wrote to her sister Mary in 1855: 'my only hope rests in the grace of God and giving them as much religious knowledge as we can.'<sup>200</sup> When she discussed her sons' futures in 1856 she expressed her

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<sup>192</sup> Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 47.

<sup>193</sup> Tosh, *A Man's Place*, p. 42; and Tosh, 'Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood', p. 52.

<sup>194</sup> Tosh, 'Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood', pp. 53-54.

<sup>195</sup> Letter: Emma Barker to her cousin Maria, 21 May 1850, 2008.127.41, CM.

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>197</sup> Transcript of a letter: Emma Barker to her sister Sophia, 1852, 2008.127.44, CM.

<sup>198</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>199</sup> Letter: Emma Barker to her sister, 2 Feb 1855, 2008.127.47, CM.

<sup>200</sup> *Ibid.*

hope that ‘they will grow up good boys fearing God.’<sup>201</sup> She also articulated her wishes for her daughters, praising infant Mary’s ‘gentleness and love,’ as well as her concerns: ‘sometimes I feel a little fear lest she should grow up too tender and delicate ... I hope God will bless her indeed.’<sup>202</sup> Overall Emma’s anxieties about her children are an expression of her love for them (see figure 9). She derived enjoyment from her children, and loved them dearly. As she noted prior to leaving for Canterbury: ‘I dread the loss of a child extremely having once nearly lost Sammy I shall not soon forget it, and every one I have seems to increase my feelings to all of them.’<sup>203</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> Letter: Emma Barker to her sister Mary, 15 Nov 1856, 2008.127.48, CM; and in 1858 Emma noted something similar: ‘the chief matter is for them to grow up good boys,’ see, Letter: Emma Barker to cousin, 11 September 1858, 92/64 (Folder 1, item 3), CM.

<sup>202</sup> Letter: Emma Barker to her sister, 2 Feb 1855, 2008.127.47, CM.

<sup>203</sup> Letter: Emma Barker to her cousin Maria, 21 May 1850, 2008.127.41, CM.



710  
Christ Church Feb 2/53  
My dear Sister  
Your letter and kind presents came  
safely by poor Mr. Hughes now a widower, her husband  
died on the voyage of Typhoon, poor little baby  
died too in 1, or 3 months she will again be a mother, so  
as our people who live in our farm house are all sent to  
kind people, they have taken her in and I believe will  
keep her there at all events until she is confined, and she  
will take in needlework; my housemaid has left her tonight  
and for a fortnight we must do with two so she is coming  
to see two days in the week to clean & she is a very  
nice person and very grateful, she gave Elizabeth a little box  
of coats & shoes which have proved a great treasure. I am  
sorry to say that, all the convalescent cases taken to the  
hospital - M. T. H. which - and Alfred has one case on  
the plains, but I trust it will please God to arrest its  
spreading by and - The stockings you sent will fit Lizzy  
except near the hipsters I am to have (as I have fully ex-  
plained to dear Sarah) and the doll is highly prized. Mary  
your niece is just 16 months old, but does not walk yet  
and is just as gentle and placid as any others we know  
she is fat and healthy looking, and sits in a chair quite  
for hours so long as I keep out of her way, considering that  
I have weaned her now 4 months her love to me is quite  
wonderful, she cannot bear me to be in the room without  
taking me through otherwise perfectly satisfied, sometimes  
I feel a little fear lest she should grow up too tender &  
delicate, and then at other times I think her gentleness  
and love very promising. Hope God will bless her and  
very happy indeed should she if my Richard had any  
of his English cousins to play with. There are very few of

Figure 9: Emma expressed her love for her daughter Mary: 'her love to me is quite wonderful.' Letter: Emma Barker to her sister, 2 February 1855, 2008.127.47, CM.

## *Fatherhood*

As demonstrated by Alfred's desire to provide his children with a better future, protection and provision were significant aspects of fatherhood for him. When he solicited his father for money, Alfred wrote that he might otherwise have to sell a few acres 'to get bread for our little ones.'<sup>204</sup> His affection for the children is also evident and after Sarah Elizabeth's birth he wrote: 'she is a sweet child with long dark hair & blue eyes.'<sup>205</sup> Alfred likewise expressed anxieties about his children's health and lamented that 'our dear little girl has been very ill for some days with dysentry & gives me much uneasiness.'<sup>206</sup> Such concerns were perhaps exacerbated by Alfred's background as a surgeon. In other areas, Alfred was more prone to let Emma worry. He mentioned Sarah Elizabeth's character and noted that she was 'a darling child & as mischievous as she is inches high, if she is not watched every moment she is off down to the river to the normall [sic] discomforture [sic] of her anxious mamma.'<sup>207</sup> Nevertheless, when Richard nearly drowned in the river he wrote that 'he got no worse than a severe fright which I hope will teach him wisdom.'<sup>208</sup> This suggests that Alfred was also worried about the safety of their children.

Little can be concluded about Alfred's involvement in raising the children when Emma was still alive. Although clearly an affectionate and caring father, it is difficult to illustrate his direct involvement with the children's upbringing. After Emma's death he appeared to take on a significantly expanded role in this area (see figure 10). Alfred wanted to remarry but never did and soon after Emma's death he gave up his practice in order to 'give [himself] up

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<sup>204</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 30 Apr 1851, 2008.127.14, CM.

<sup>205</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 19 Mar 1851, 2008.127.13, CM.

<sup>206</sup> Transcript: Extracts of letters from A.C. Barker, Aug 1852, 2008.127.21, CM.

<sup>207</sup> Letter: Dr Alfred Charles Barker to his brother Henry, 3 Oct 1852, 2008.127.29, CM.

<sup>208</sup> Note: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 29 Nov 1854, 2008.127.36, CM.

to the care of [his] poor motherless children.<sup>209</sup> During this time, Miss Bowen also took on an expanded role in parenting and teaching the children.<sup>210</sup> The Barker children mentioned their father in their letters to their Uncle Matthias. They wrote that he taught them how to hunt, that he bought them a horse to ride and that they went on a trip to Sumner.<sup>211</sup> The children, including his daughters, clearly had a lot of physical freedom. Sarah Elizabeth wrote of going to stay on stations and both she and Mary were educated.<sup>212</sup> Alfred expressed that the children gave him much comfort in his later years, although he occasionally lamented Emma's absence. He mentioned that 'Lizzie grows a great tall girl ... sorely in need of a mother's care.'<sup>213</sup>

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<sup>209</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to sisters (Misses Bacon), 3 October 1858, 92/64 (Folder 1, item 4), CM; and Burden, *Dr. A.C. Barker 1819-1873*, p. 84.

<sup>210</sup> Before Emma died, Miss Bowen made a promise to look after them. See, Letter: Alfred Barker to sisters (Misses Bacon), 3 October 1858, 92/64 (Folder 1, item 4), CM.

<sup>211</sup> Letter: Sarah Elizabeth Barker to her uncle Matthias Barker, 12 Aug 1862, 2008.127.62, CM; and Letter: Samuel Delabere Barker to his uncle Matthias Barker, 1 Jan 1861, 2008.127.71, CM.

<sup>212</sup> Letter: Sarah Elizabeth Barker to her uncle Matthias Barker, 12 Aug 1862, 2008.127.62, CM.

<sup>213</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to his brother Matthias Barker, 5 July 1861, 92/64 (Folder 3, item 26), CM.



to the utmost of my power I tried  
 look after his children. He with  
 God blessing, said so, but after  
 all the weight must fall upon  
 my poor father who is now  
 weakened with his infirmities  
 but has known this better and not  
 to refuse. You should know  
 how soon when I came here  
 on Sunday with a little daughter  
 on each knee & her boys round  
 the table reading while about  
 in the Testament while he talked  
 to them. His whole heart  
 seems set upon fulfilling his  
 duty to them, but the reality  
 will be great when the very day  
 comes of a family time before him  
 without any confederate. I must  
 & am now heartily for him. Among  
 the baby's name is William Edward.

[4] Christchurch N. Zealand  
 Oct. 3. 1858.  
 Copy of a letter from A. L. Barker  
 to Misses Bacon.  
 My dear sisters  
 It is with the bitterest  
 grief I write to tell you of the  
 heavy affliction it has pleased  
 God to send me, & my poor  
 children. Yesterday between  
 7 & 8 in the morning my  
 dearest Emma died. After  
 about a weeks illness, she  
 went home, she is gone, but  
 many as in the glow of hope  
 as the consolation of the  
 prospect before me, I have  
 endeavoured, yes, I can say  
 I do thank God for the  
 blessed drop of her departure.

Figure 10: A transcript of Alfred's letter to the Bacon sisters, conveying news of Emma's death. The left hand-side is part of a letter from Miss Bowen, who noted that '[Alfred's] whole heart seems set upon fulfilling his duty to [his children]'. Letter: Alfred Barker to sisters (Misses Bacon), 3 October 1858, 92/64 (Folder 1, item 4), CM.

## *Family Networks*

Extended family in England influenced the Barker family in the realm of parenting. They named Sarah Elizabeth after Alfred's sister, and Alfred hoped that she might 'resemble her in disposition.'<sup>214</sup> After the birth of their son John Matthias, Emma wrote that 'it is pleasing at this distance to keep up names.'<sup>215</sup> Their extended family remained important for the Barker children well into their adult years. After Emma's death, Matthias Barker, Alfred's brother, came to visit them in Canterbury. Alfred implored Matthias to look after the children if he were to pass away as well.<sup>216</sup> The children wrote to him extensively after he had gone back to England, suggesting the significance of the connection they had with their uncle. When Alfred and Emma's second son Samuel wrote to Matthias he said: 'I hope you are all well at home.'<sup>217</sup> This suggests that England was still important to the children to some degree. Some of the Barker sons returned to England to study there, indicating that it remained significant for their prospects.<sup>218</sup> The extent of the connections is emphasised by Sarah Elizabeth's correspondence with her aunt Maria, nearly thirty years after Alfred and Emma had left England. Her aunt sent her a book and Sarah Elizabeth expressed her gratitude: 'I thought it especially kind of you...when you have never seen me and I have been such a bad correspondent.'<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>214</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to Joseph Gibbs Barker, 19 Mar 1851, 2008.127.13, CM.

<sup>215</sup> Letter: Emma Barker to her sister Mary, 15 Nov 1856, 2008.127.48, CM. Emma also likened her children to their relatives, noting that Arthur reminded her of 'dear grandmamma Barker,' see, Transcript of a letter: Emma Barker to her sister Sophia, 1852, 2008.127.44, CM.

<sup>216</sup> Letter: Alfred Barker to his brother Matthias, 4 October 1858, 92/64 (Folder 1, item 5), CM.

<sup>217</sup> Letter: Samuel Delabere Barker to his uncle Matthias Barker, 1861, 2008.127.78, CM.

<sup>218</sup> Burden, *Dr. A.C. Barker 1819-1873*, p. 82.

<sup>219</sup> Transcript: Letter from Sarah Elizabeth Barker to Aunt Maria, Circa 1978, 2008.127.224, CM.

## *Conclusion*

Family dynamics gave rise to different gendered experiences of parenthood for Emma and Alfred. A significant component of their marriage was the upbringing of their children, with Emma giving birth to eight children during her lifetime. Pregnancy and childbirth gave rise to a different experience of parenthood for Emma. She was also more involved with moral guidance and the moulding of her children's temperament and characteristics. She loved her children and motherhood shaped the more positive aspects of her migration experience. Alfred was an affectionate father, concerned with providing for and protecting his children. Following on from Emma's death they were a comfort to him and he was invested in their wellbeing. Furthermore, the Barker children's ongoing connections with their extended family in England demonstrate the importance of kinship networks. A discussion of parenthood highlights the significance of family in the migration process. Not only do Emma and Alfred's aspirations reflect their investment in their children's futures, but their correspondence suggests that connections in England remained important.

## CONCLUSION

An analysis of Emma and Alfred's letters to their extended family in England demonstrates how personal correspondence can add richness to the study of nineteenth-century migration to New Zealand. Sequences of letters written during the migration process illustrate both the joys and tribulations that Emma and Alfred experienced during their first years in Canterbury. Examining how the Barker family dynamics gave rise to gendered experiences for Emma and Alfred assists in telling a nuanced and personal story of migration. Not only is a woman's voice uncovered from the past, but it is interwoven with her husband's, emphasising how gender is constructed and negotiated at the interpersonal level. Throughout this analysis, the twin influences of class and religion have also been considered. These concepts were significant facets of Victorian gender ideals, and had a particular bearing on the middle-class and religious Barker family.

Rather than an experience of 'unsettlement', Emma's correspondence suggests that a more nuanced view of women's experiences of migration is warranted. This dissertation dispels any rigid notions of what gender signified for Emma and Alfred during the migration process. In this way, it can speak to wider issues around marriage, parenthood and kinship networks in colonial New Zealand. Although both Emma and Alfred felt despondent at times, they gained solace from religion and their lasting connections with England. Both Emma and Alfred wanted to provide their children with a better future, and this joint task in many ways defined their migration experiences. Placing family at the heart of migration illuminates the significance of wider kinship networks. This dissertation adds significantly to scholarship on gender, migration and the Western family. It demonstrates that generalisation can be counteracted by personal and nuanced stories, and in this way speak to wider themes in the historiography.



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